

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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IT'S (FINALLY) TIME TO 'SET IT AND FORGET IT'

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Legendary inventor and pitchman Ron Popeil — whose “set it and forget it” slogan helped put millions of “O-Matic” branded and other automated products into homes — would be a big fan of where the media and entertainment industry is headed.

There’s no doubt that automation is the key to this industry’s future. The reality is we’ve already begun an unending march toward “push-button” everything. If the first stage was moving from a very physical, hand-stitched world to a very digital, connected ecosystem, the second is automation and transforming your workforce.

A dozen years ago at our Hollywood IT Society (HITS) event it was interesting hearing from all those CIO teams about what their thoughts for the future were. It involved automation. They knew it already, long before the technology existed to make it a reality. The truth has remained the same: to march with the pace of innovation and change, we must embrace workflows that can be automated. It’ll be impossible to keep up otherwise.

Look at the Entertainment ID Registry (EIDR), a fundamental DNA building block for our supply chain, a perfect example of automation in action benefiting every corner of our business. Metadata is the grease on the wheels of the automation engine. Whether it’s a smart contract or automatically knowing this is the right version of a “Harry Potter” that I’m sending to Taiwan. We recognized early at MESA how important the metadata piece was, how precious a commodity. Studios should control it, own it, and integrate it across all their business.

Things can be authenticated without a human being involved, like the fundamental basics of delivering a piece of video content. But when we extrapolate

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that to smart contracts, take it to a place where rights are determined far before we know where content’s going to be played, that’s the Holy Grail of the automated world, where we don’t have to worry about checking some avails list. We’ll continue to build more onto the automation chain and people are already experiencing this with their own CRMs, their own social media approaches, their own platform approach to their business. And it’s only going to get crazier ... and better. Much like how APIs transformed our landscape and microservices and how platforms and workflows talk to each other, automation will do the same with addressable pings in that chain.

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE.

Part of the promise of automation resides with AI, transforming the workplace in a way that allows us to spend our hours on more meaningful (read: creative) things. If a robot can easily do it, chances are it’s beneath you as a human. Automation is the key to operating at scale. We’ve previously learned how to scale by hiring a lot of hand-stitchers, but with automation, you

can keep on as many hand stitchers as you want ... they're just going to be hand stitching different parts of your workflow or concentrating on a more mind-intensive endeavors.

That's the separator between humans and machines: they may think faster than us, but we're capable of creativity and thinking around corners. And it's creativity that makes Hollywood stand out from other industries. Content remains king and that will always require creatives. But the reality is 80 percent of the work backing them up can be automated.

Automation is the future also because we must change so many things we once did with a wink or a handshake or a pat on the back. We always talk about vendor lock and how your vendor relationships need to be a win. You got to deliver great product ahead of schedule and exactly to the client's wishes.

Yes, we're a relationship-based business but automation reinforces those relationships and allows us to spend our precious hours working on the business part of it, not on the nuts and bolts behind it.

That's the promise. When you see it working, when you see that weird rotisserie chicken oven doing its job without manual help,