

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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THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE NEXT

By Eric Rigney, Vice President, MEDCA

The mission of the Media & Entertainment Data Center Alliance (MEDCA) is to advocate the adoption and implementation of data industry standards within media and entertainment digital infrastructure. Within its first year, MEDCA succeeded in introducing important conversations among some significant leaders in both the data industry and media and entertainment. MEDCA member companies such as PacketFabric, Coresite, and Keycode Media are individually promoting the importance of data industry standards to the community via social media, panel discussions, and marketing. This is a very encouraging and prideful start.

As the message spreads, the next challenge becomes getting facilities and services to implement the standards so proudly advertised. While manufacturers, vendors, and clients realize the importance of adoption, they have difficulty breaking habits and implementing the “new way” within their organizations.

Sadly, a quick survey by any qualified digital infrastructural professional of nearly any of today’s M&E operation’s digital infrastructure will present a gross lack of understanding and often negligent installation practices. This is in part because, ironically, the “new way” is anything but new, arguably even older than the audio/video standards they are asked to set aside when supporting data centric pipelines. “It worked before” or “if it glows it goes” only worked because the acceptable margin for error in the past allowed it. Those margins are exponentially thinner now. A/V engineers and technicians place blame on the new hardware instead of sub-standard digital infrastructure. That’s why manufacturers and data service providers are jumping on board MEDCA faster than M&E operations and service providers.

SMPTE, AES/EBU, and other A/V standards will continue to have their place, but alongside TIA, IEEE, and other data industry standards when it comes to data pathways. How much electro-statically charged dust can high-performance graphics tolerate? When is it okay to zip tie fiber optic cables? What’s a nine-staged uninterrupted power supply appropriate for an M&E operation? What is a NINE-stage UPS anyway? Cable

THE DATA CENTER SPECTRUM

It’s not enough to talk the talk. Learning and implementing good digital infrastructure practices is the best way to break bad habits. MEDCA continues to look for companies and individuals within them to identify the data industry standards most suited to support M&E today. In the digital world, tomorrow is already here.

management, environmental controls, hardware selection, redundancy, power, monitoring, and maintenance, are just a few areas that differ greatly when comparing A/V and data industry standards.

Two answers remain unaddressed: what specific data industry standards best serve specific verticals within M&E and what needs to happen before decision makers, both management and technical, decide to make the investment in education and capital expenditure? These, in addition to continuing the effort to build awareness and support, are what MEDCA and its members will begin to tackle.

So, while important and valuable progress has been made over a short period of time, save a few exceptions, implementation has not. Next steps require member leadership to bring MEDCA members together to begin the process of parsing existing data industry standards to support specific M&E verticals, and then finding those operations less harden in tradition and tribal knowledge willing to invest in education, planning, and



Eric Rigney, executive vice president of MEDCA, is lead instructor of virtual production for Mo-Sys Academy. He is the former VP of multiple post service operations for Sony Pictures, including localization, sound archive, and equipment rental and support, spending 20-plus years with the studio. He is a contributing member of SMPTE, HPA, and ETC, active in virtual production educational initiatives, LED panel and lighting technologies, color analysis, and sound reverberation and noise mitigation on volume stages. eric.rigney@medcaonline.org

effort to reap the many rewards of digital infrastructure standards: interoperability, technical alignment, reliability, security, and more.

M&E in its current state cannot imagine a world where digital equipment from one company can be plugged into another company's infrastructure and work seamlessly. Technicians cannot imagine a world where "unforeseen" issues are not a daily occurrence, or WiFi dropouts. CFOs cannot imagine a world that doesn't require a major infrastructural upgrade every 3-5 years. Customers cannot imagine a world without downtime due to a "glitch in the system," an unintended reboot, excruciatingly long render times, or corrupted media files.

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