

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?

23,01

BRINGING PLATFORM POWER TO AUTOMATION

Workflow Proliferation is
Collapsing Under Its Own Weight



ABSTRACT: The benefits of automation are undeniable, but it is expensive and inefficient for each media company to undertake a custom design/build workflow initiative. With a multi-tenant SaaS platform that is already operating at scale, Signiant is uniquely positioned to deliver ecosystem leverage via reusable, productized workflow building blocks. Easily connectable with modern APIs, these next-generation media process automation modules will provide optionality, scalability, short time to value, and high resiliency/availability.

**By Rick Capstraw, Chief Growth Officer,
Signiant**

As file-based media workflows became a reality in the mid-2000s, a new class of technical solutions emerged to enable easy creation of custom workflows. These tools were fit for purpose in the relatively static world of large-scale linear playout centers, where a single set of workflows can service an entire media business. It's practical to build and support a highly customized, one-off "high volume, low mix" factory to perform the complicated, high-value task of linear broadcast.

In today's fast-moving, cross-platform world, this legacy approach to workflow is collapsing under its own weight. Easy customization leads to out-of-control workflow proliferation, duplication of effort, and fragile systems that are far too complex and brittle to operate efficiently. The modern media factory is "high volume, high mix" and must be extremely flexible and agile. Layering more and more bespoke workflows on top of each other does not result in a scalable and sustainable system.

WORKFLOW PROLIFERATION IS COLLAPSING UNDER ITS OWN WEIGHT

Cloud technology came along just as cross-platform distribution was gaining traction.

Moving workflow automation to the cloud can be helpful from a technical perspective — we can build lighter weight, loosely coupled processes using microservices. But unfortunately, lift-&-shift cloud deployments are no panacea. A single-tenant, bespoke "cloud-based supply chain" has the same core challenge: hundreds of custom workflows piled on top of each other are expensive and inefficient to maintain.

"Different technology, same paradigm" did not save the day. In fact,

resiliency and availability can be even harder to realize in the cloud — and escalating cloud costs quickly become problematic.

RE-THINKING THE SOLUTION — A NEW PROCESS AUTOMATION VISION

It's time to step back and assess whether removing friction from the process of creating new workflows is really the problem to be solved. What if we came at it from the other side, focusing instead on how to leverage the high levels of commonality across the media sector to produce an off-the-shelf starting point? From our discussions with industry leaders, there's an emerging understanding that a modern media factory solution requires these attributes:

- *Productized, out-of-the-box common workflow cores*
- *Building block framework—mix and match functional modules, with no need to commit to an end-to-end system*
- *Comprehensive APIs for configurability and extensibility*
- *Codified delivery specs from common distribution partners to enable automated essence conversion and validation, as well as metadata schema translation and validation*
- *Holistic view of the interactions between people and systems, with dynamic role-specific user interfaces to deliver well-defined work to the right parties*
- *Cleanly architected, off-the-shelf 3rd-party integration components*
- *Lightweight work order model to efficiently deliver system instructions*
- *Integrated metadata conduit to unify disparate sources of structured and unstructured metadata—no need to re-ingest assets into a MAM*
- *Simple utilization-based pricing that is correlated with value delivered*

Excitement is building around this new vision, which promises to bring efficiency and cost-effectiveness to

IT'S TIME TO STEP BACK and assess whether removing friction from the process of creating new workflows is really the problem to be solved. What if we came at it from the other side, focusing instead on how to leverage the high levels of commonality across the media sector to produce an off-the-shelf starting point?

companies of all sizes. With this model, media companies still have the opportunity to customize workflows in areas where unique functionality is needed, but reinventing the wheel and gratuitous roll-your-own initiatives can be eliminated.

THE FOUNDATIONAL SAAS PLATFORM EXISTS TODAY

Why is Signiant the obvious choice to lead the way? Simply put, it's because we have already done much of the heavy lifting. Our rock-solid platform provides the connective tissue for all sectors of the global media & entertainment ecosystem. Years of innovation and massive investment have produced a true enterprise SaaS platform with these key elements:

- *Patented multi-tenant hybrid SaaS architecture—cloud control plane with a distributed on-prem/cloud data plane*
- *Fast file access—underpinned by the proven network optimization technology that the media industry relies on to send, share, and access large files over IP networks*
- *Content exchange framework—designed to broker both inter- and intra-company connections*
- *Support for distributed, diverse storage—connected to on-premises and/or cloud storage*
- *Powerful search and preview—via acquired technology that has been integrated into the Signiant platform, users*



Rick Capstraw is the chief growth officer for Signiant. He leads the global strategic sales and alliances organization of the company, focused on accelerating worldwide growth. With a proven track record of leadership, he has built a career in delivering technology solutions in global markets that help to transform the way we use and consume media. rcapstraw@signiant.com @Signiant

can find and act on media assets on any storage, anywhere, in any format

■ *Built-in platform elements—roles/personas, APIs, security model, user interfaces, etc. are all established and in use today*

■ *SaaS business framework—utilization-based subscription pricing, 24/7 SRE support, ‘no surprises’ customer success engagement*

Perhaps most importantly, this platform is already operating at scale throughout the global media ecosystem. The Signiant Platform connects 50,000 media companies and over one million end users — it’s the de facto standard.

Signiant technology is already out there, busily orchestrating lights-out tasks related to file movement. It’s logical to extend this foundation into adjacent process automation areas and build a modern media factory on the Signiant Platform. In 2021 we took a major step forward with the acquisition of Reach Engine by Levels Beyond. The technical talent and know-how of the Reach Engine team are accelerating our ability to bring the new vision to life, and we all share the conviction that simplification and productization are the right way to tackle workflow complexity.

THE POWER OF PLATFORMS

The word “platform” is broadly used by technology companies, but all platforms are not created equal. The Signiant Platform meets a very

specific set of criteria, in that it serves as the core of an ecosystem, allowing platform participants to benefit from the presence of others, and is already operating at critical mass. Such a platform offers very tangible customer benefits including:

■ *Optionality. Use any kind of storage, extend/configure via modern APIs, easily connect to your choice of 3rd-party technologies, mix and match best of breed from Signiant and other companies.*

■ *Scalability. When you add users or workloads, we’ll automatically scale up and out to accommodate the load. This is the magic of multi-tenancy.*

■ *Time to value. With enough time and money, anybody can build anything in the cloud. But why would you? The ability to be up and running quickly, and to turn on a dime when change inevitably happens, is extremely valuable in today’s media world.*

■ *Resiliency and availability. Because we’re operating at scale, Signiant can invest in building and maintaining a highly robust system.*

The world has changed. Endless creation of custom workflows isn’t an efficient way to support hundreds of distribution partners, and it isn’t necessary. The power of platforms will allow Signiant to provide a shared common core that can be leveraged by thousands of media companies, in turn enabling content creators to do more with less. ■



The Signiant Platform

Connects people, systems and the cloud for 50,000+ media & entertainment companies.

