

# 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

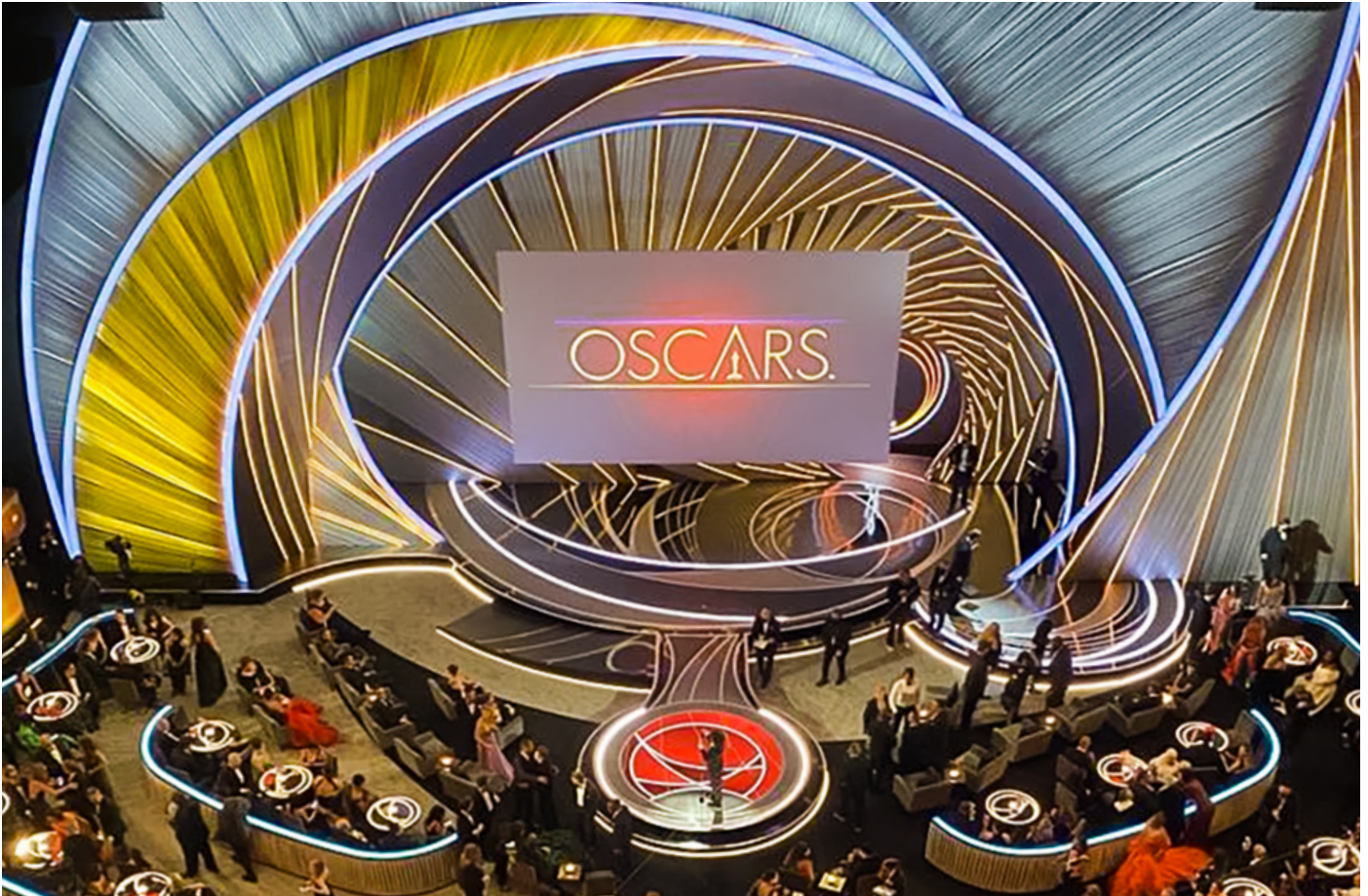
## SECURITY SOLUTIONS:

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

# 23,01

# SETTING THE STAGE

How the Academy modernized its processes for membership administration and awards management



**ABSTRACT:** For more than a decade, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and Slalom have partnered to modernize and streamline the organization's processes, from award submissions to the red carpet. By replacing many systems with single, integrated enterprise architecture, Slalom helped the Academy accelerate its ability to empower and advance the media and entertainment industry.

**By Igor Mandrosov, Technology Strategist, Delivery Leader, and Steven Polster, Managing Director, Media, Entertainment, Slalom**

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of the arts and sciences of motion pictures. Today, the Academy is one of the most recognized names in the entertainment industry, comprising more than 10,000 motion picture professionals.

In 2010, the Academy approached Slalom to modernize its processes for membership administration and awards management. As an organization that had been operating for nearly a century, the Academy sought to embark on a transformation. It required a deeply collaborative and comprehensive approach — something that could stand the test of time, much like the Academy itself.

**ANOTHER OF SLALOM AND THE ACADEMY'S** *most impactful implementations is the new RAISE platform, which rolled out in 2021 to facilitate the Academy's Representation and Inclusion Standards for Best Picture consideration.*

"We share a profound respect for the Academy and its impact on its members, the film industry, and audiences around the globe," said Slalom CEO Brad Jackson. "No matter how beneficial, changes to such an iconic organization require building and embedding a deep sense of trust. The mutual respect between Slalom and the Academy has been fundamental to the success of our partnership."

#### THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY

Slalom introduced a comprehensive solution to manage the membership and award process data. However, the technology itself would only go so far.

The missing piece was visionary technology leader Beverly "Bev" Kite. Hired in 2014, Kite is the Academy's first CTO and the driving force behind the digital overhaul.

"When I came in, the Academy had made some changes to become more digital, but there wasn't a unified approach to technology or data," Kite said. "What it needed was a real digital transformation."

Among Kite's initial ideas were self-service solutions for managing award submissions and Academy member management. Powered by a centralized source of truth, this core initiative allowed the Academy to integrate its membership, awards submissions, and awards data and processes, eliminating loads of manual work.

"Bringing everything together was a key piece in helping the organization innovate and expand," said Slalom senior delivery principal Charina Palma. "A lot of processes are

being streamlined because the data is now at the Academy's fingertips."

This move would ultimately revolutionize the awards industry and lay down the foundation for a bigger vision that included automating the entire awards process.

"Academy IT worked to automate nearly everything, from submissions to the red carpet," said Igor Mandrosov, a senior principal at Slalom. "We are extremely proud that most of what everyone knows about the Academy processes has the Slalom footprint somewhere in it."

"All these changes have internationalized the organization — connecting our members worldwide — and sped up and streamlined our processes," Kite said.

#### A HISTORY-MAKING PARTNERSHIP

After working through the initial hurdles and developing a mutual sense of trust, the partnership between the Academy and Slalom took off. Today, it remains one of Slalom's most enduring and active client relationships.

"These are not just projects. It is a partnership," Mandrosov said. The work is not divided between Slalom and the Academy, he says. Instead, it's the result of ongoing collaboration.

This powerful sentiment is shared not only by Mandrosov but the group of Slalom consultants who have been working with the Academy for at least seven years each. When Slalom initially recommended a technological solution to manage the Academy's membership, its senior



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director of applications development, Nick Amparano, was immediately put at ease by the team's professionalism and expertise.

"It's very symbiotic," said Slalom senior consultant Stacy Scherer. "We work seamlessly together."

For Les Jin, vice president of IT infrastructure at the Academy, "innovation" is the first word that comes to mind when reflecting on the partnership with Slalom.

"It was the mutual investment in the organization's long-term goals and desire to take risks that created such a profound level of trust," Kite said. "It's been an incredible journey. We've all worked together for nine or 10 years at this point, so there is a sense of trust. I have confidence that the Slalom team will always express their opinions and be a challenger."

### A LEGACY ORGANIZATION WITH A GLOBAL IMPACT

In 2017, the Academy launched a program called Academy GOLD — an industry talent development initiative focused on underrepresented communities. Slalom helped automate the process and shape the user experience, allowing the Academy to provide program participants with resources to better pursue careers in filmmaking.

Another of Slalom and the Academy's most impactful implementations is the new RAISE platform, which rolled out in 2021 to facilitate the Academy's Representation and Inclusion Standards for Best Picture consideration. While the primary use of the platform is to facilitate the Academy's awards process, it also provides

insight into current trends in the industry related to representation and inclusion that can help stimulate positive change in the industry.

But like many organizational changes, the work doesn't end at implementation — it requires an ongoing, collaborative process.

By the 96th Academy Awards in 2024, all films submitted for awards consideration must meet inclusion standards to be eligible in the Best Picture category, and the RAISE platform will be essential in this review.

"All these changes have internationalized the organization — connecting our members worldwide — and sped up and streamlined our processes," Kite said.

Now, the Academy's IT department is a strong and future-forward team working on more than 50 projects yearly. The organization's growth, scalability, and ease of use are top priorities.

"We've made some impactful decisions in the past decade since working with Slalom," Amparano said. "Now it's time to shift to a self-service model and start giving ownership back to the business."

The Academy's IT department has its sights set on the future with a clear vision for improving and building on its successes, focusing primarily on audience strategy and digital media services.

"It wasn't an easy transformation, but we're in a place now where it's so natural," Kite said. "Natural for our staff to use the technology, natural for our members to expect the technology, and natural for us to execute and show what can be done." ■

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