WHO OWNS THE WORKFLOW?

JIGSAW24 | MEDIA

LucidLink

Jigsaw24 Media is a specialist division of Jigsaw24 and provides services and technology solutions to the media and entertainment, education and corporate sectors. The company's team of industry-recognised experts design, deliver, integrate and support end-to-end solutions for some of the nation's biggest broadcasters and facilities, underpinned by partnerships with over 30 leading technology vendors.

Jigsaw24 Media and LucidLink's partnership dates back to early 2020 when the systems integrator was one of the first media and entertainment companies to recognise the potential of LucidLink's remote collaboration storage solution for professional post-production.

LucidLink is an award-winning SaaS company that makes data instantly and securely accessible for everyone, everywhere. This cloud-based technology enables creative teams to seamlessly collaborate from anywhere by giving them lightning-fast access to their critical files and most-loved apps – all in a familiar format that makes cloud storage act like a local hard drive.

Jigsaw24 Media is one of only 20 worldwide LucidLink partners and the only gold-level partner in the UK media and entertainment industry.

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On the 31st August Televisual gathered together many of the brightest business and technical experts working in UK production and post to ask them about the future of media management, who should own the workflow, what role the post house has, where the cloud might play a role and about the viability of standardisation. The panel came from a deliberately broad cross section of companies with varied experiences.

The following write-up in many ways acts as a companion piece with our special report on media management. There is no one size fits all within television and film and each production requires an individual workflow experience and interpretation. IT vendors on the other hand tend to want to rationalise and standardise processes and outcomes.

What shines through from this discussion is the continued need for individual technical and operational experience at a local level to support UK production. And that expertise will be needed for many years to come.

The animated discussion took place in the Snooker Room at the Groucho Club in Soho over dinner and wine. Televisual is grateful for all the contributions from the panel for what proved to be a wide-ranging discussion.



CARA SHEPPARD We have just bought 25 petabytes of storage. It pains me to do it, but we have. We did a cost analysis for a data centre, ingress, egress, air conditioning costs... or do we build our own? If I've got 30 colourers in the same building all wanting to stream 4K, that infrastructure is still cheaper for me to run on-premises.

DANIEL JONES And that's where we've always been lucky in the audio realm because everything's teeny-weeny by comparison to 4K pictures. My business model was based on being able to easily move content around. 17 years ago I could do that. I would say that everyone should look at the music and audio industry. It's just size of data, right?

RUPERT WATSON You should only be paying for cloud storage when you're getting paid to work on it. If you're sitting on 25 petabytes, and you're using the cloud, you're doing something wrong. Unless you're getting paid for 25 petabytes, which is doing something incredibly right.

In its purest form, the cloud works because it's agile and you only pay for what you're using, so, your cashflow is incredibly auditable and your agility is very high. And you can take on jobs you otherwise wouldn't be able to. If a client turns up and say I need 48 suites for an hour on Monday, no physical post house is going to say yes to that, because it makes no sense.

SIMON GREEN I think we'd all agree it's inevitable the cloud is where it's going.

Edit Cloud typically works with enterprise business because they've got the problem of how to remain flexible, how do we connect to talent in a different way that isn't purely reliant on being in a premises. So, whilst we are not just about working from home, everything's in the cloud. Whether you spin up in a facility, all those editors you employ are logging into the same machine. The machine and the content are what it's about.

JASON COWAN Most of the post facilities and broadcasters are Jigsaw customers, and in the last few years we've



seen how many have come back from a public cloud to working on premises or increasingly within a private cloud. The public cloud is just not an economical model for certain workflows for them. In some respects, we're going backwards from what we did three years ago.

SIMON GREEN Buildings are more expensive than they were five, ten years ago, rates are more expensive, everything's more expensive, so there has to be an understanding that there are, more than ever before, horses for courses. If you're doing *The Little Mermaid* at Picture Shop, you need a locked off 'black box' that can't be penetrated.

CARA SHEPPARD And unscripted is a completely different cost and revenue model. It's a different security model. It's a different technology model. I keep my scripted and unscripted pipelines divided, like the Berlin Wall, because they are so different.

WORKING FROM HOME

RICHARD SIMPSON From a user's point of view, if I was an editor, would I not be wanting to charge production for the room that I'm using? They've got their day rate, but they're not charging kit rate or for a space to work at home.

Yes, the producers are going to expect to pay less, but shouldn't the editors be saying, 'well, you're using my room, you're using my computer to connect to here, my internet connection and my electricity. With all the cost savings that you're making elsewhere, shouldn't I be billing you?'

LAURA BUTCHER We're always giving the talent what they want. We want them to be able to work remotely, however they want to work, but what we constantly hear is, 'oh, I can't do that, that's not available to me.' We understand that there's a perception that everything should be on a plate, as it would be in house. The issues they encounter are so often around their internet connection.

BRIAN LEONARD I feel like I'm in the same galaxy as you all, but on a different planet. Your problems are similar but they're not the same problems that I have.

When we're doing sport and have to live turnaround, having someone remotely at home, and having the entire show dependent on their internet connection, when it's going out on ITV later on that night, is just never going to work. And it's very similar for news.

ZEB CHADFIELD Working within a traditional facility, we had to work so hard to pay the bills, to keep the lights on, and that ran me into the ground. I concluded that what matters when it comes to delivering high-end pictures is the people and the tools that they have access to. Every decision I make is around what nurtures the people, prioritises their personal lives, and it allows them to then bring their best to their creative art. And that includes where they want to work.

LAURA BUTCHER We're not relinquishing any of our control when we use Zeb's services, I feel like he is part of the team that we're using to produce something.

ZEB CHADFIELD We augment MSV's facility's capability while not having those overheads.

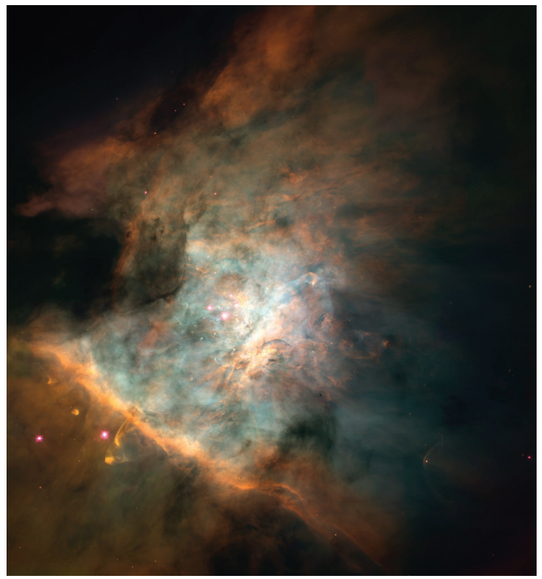
DANIEL JONES We're only there when our services are needed. If they say, 'we don't need that right now', we're not there. So, it's a turn on/turn off service.

CHRIS SARSON I think something we haven't touched on so far, but I think everyone can relate to this, is the staffing crisis we've got in this industry. The production companies have got their own problems. They don't want to worry about how they've backed up the camera rushes, so they employ specialists from DITs to post.

SIAN GWILLIAM And that's at the heart of what we do at Bloody Norah TV. We match the right operational and creative talent to the productions we're working on. It isn't a one size fits all production landscape and each production requires different specialists with the right experience.

STANDARDISATION

TOM MITCHELL Normally towards the beginning of production, if you're lucky enough to have the conversation, you'll get VFX, post people, production, DoPs and editors on a Zoom call. There's this awkward moment where the hanging question is who's going to take responsibility for planning out the workflow. In many cases, as a company that sits in between, we end up taking that responsibility. Others like Picture Shot, or Company Three will do that as well.



The production company's focus is just on producing the movie or show. What Netflix and the streaming shows are wanting is to have control over the deliverable and they now want to collect the in between assets. If you're going to be doing LIDAR on set, then why would you want to do another scan for a completely different game team to create the VR version as well? I've had with the Universal teams. They're building a whole database system to track every single asset. For example, for *Fast and Furious* cars. Not just the car in the movie, but all the separate stunt cars and all the individual components of that car, the colour of the paint, all those things.

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>
> **CARA SHEPPARD**
> President, Picture Shop

You don't want someone downscaling material halfway through the process and then up scaling it and getting garbage out. The conclusion that Netflix or Universal are reaching is, 'if we save all the data centrally, all the VFX people are going to post all their project data, all their assets there as well. We're going to build a database for that. We're going to know exactly who's checking in and who's checking out stuff. And we now have all the components and all the individual bits which we can use in other IP.

So, we need to dictate that workflow to all contributors, whether they're working in the UK or in Europe, America or India.' Then they have that consistency across the board. It's about standardising the way the way that we work. But if they can do that as a software defined workflow and they can control their data and all the assets that are generated throughout the entire process, then I would say that that would be a studio's wet dream. That's the conversation.

DANIEL JONES If you look at how gaming works, it is super different from film and TV. And it shouldn't be. We work in both camps. We find it's just more considered. So not everything is a surprise. And the



workflow, we're all working to what can fit in that game. So, the constraint is the size.

It must be the common tool set, though, and that what speaks to Tom's point. So, ultimately the workflows and the data processes data will become more common and there'll be standards like there is within Universal Screen Description now. It will all eventually be standardised.

GRAHAM MCGUINESS The IP owners make money from the IP. They are contributing to it based on the amount of money that they're paid in turn. They put down all these criteria in order to quality control the data input, quality control the assets that are coming into their domain.

RICHARD SIMPSON In our experience, Amazon are the ones that particularly want to have everything on their cloud because they've got the S3 infrastructure, and they want to deliver it like that. It doesn't work quite the way that they want in terms of permissions if it sits outside of the plan.

Netflix are still not so cloud based. They, want everything on LTO tape and taped copies to be in different places. Yes, they have those assets, but they are not as accessible.

WHO SHOULD OWN THE WORKFLOW?

CARA SHEPPARD It is our ultimate responsibility to deliver what the client wants. And make sure that they have access to elements from wherever they want, at whatever speed they want, with however much storage they want. I would argue that the studios at a higher level, they don't want to make the sausage. They want the sausage made a specific way in a specific flavour, but they don't want to make it.

DANIEL JONES We operate our embedded services by bolting into infrastructure. Every different production company or group we deal with already have their own workflows. We just adapt and change into that.

LAURA BUTCHER I agree with what Cara was saying, very much so in that we should be in control of the pipeline. I find that with the streamers that I've worked with recently. We're talking to marketing and money people. We're not talking to production people or technical people. And they don't have the same skill set as we do. We should be looking at how we can make things better for everyone involved in the process, by offering our expertise.

CARA SHEPPARD I've worked for a broadcaster, I've worked for a post facility, I've been a production manager, and I was a post production supervisor. My interest has always been what I'm doing and who I'm serving. If I'm in a post house, then I'm going to make sure I can deliver the best quality product so my client keeps coming back. So, your perspective changes with your priority.

CHRIS SARSON I think Cara's reason of wanting to own responsibility is because we're the ones who have got to deliver it. The production staff have often moved on to the next production.

JASON COWAN I've only been in Jigsaw for two years and we've seen a massive shift. Over that time our professional services income has doubled. More and more people are looking at us to provide consultancy services and because we work with all the post facilities, we have the benefit of experience and can say, 'this didn't quite work here, or this works consistently.'

CHRIS SARSON The users are the people experiencing the product more so than the reseller, so the user is always going to teach the reseller how to market.