

Case Study Spotlight

Streamlining the Production and Delivery of Video Content

Universal Sports leverages cloud solutions for editing and publishing sports programming for the web and mobile devices



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- Multi-platform media destination for Olympic-related sports.
- Offers more than 1,200 hours of original HD programming each year
- Exclusive rights to world & national championships and sports including skiing, swimming, track and field, gymnastics, volleyball, figure skating and rugby.

Overview

Universal Sports, a partnership between NBC Sports and InterMedia Partners, LP, is the premier multi-platform media destination for Olympic-related sports programming in the United States.

The company provides more than 1,200 hours of original HD programming each year. Universal Sports has exclusive rights to world and national championship events in a wide array of sports, including swimming, track and field, gymnastics, cycling, skiing, figure skating and rugby.

Universal Sports offers a four-screen experience to fans of global sports every day of the year on television, online, mobile devices and tablet applications. Live streaming events and full event replays are available exclusively to Astound, BendBroadband, DIRECTV, DISH, Hawaiian Telcom and WAVE Broadband customers with Universal Sports as part of their television package. The company makes video clips and footage from many of the events it covers available for online audiences for viewing on the UniversalSports.com website and on other sites where it is able to generate advertising revenues from pre-roll ads displayed prior to the video clips.

The Challenge

Universal Sports Network recently transitioned to a multi-platform, high definition cable, satellite and IPTV service. The transition has resulted in a new monetization model for the company, moving from a paid content model to a "TV Everywhere" model where the firm is paid a fee for the number of television subscribers receiving Universal Sports content from their cable, satellite or IPTV providers. The new monetization model created the opportunity to establish new revenue streams from advertising and sponsorships.

The company covers hundreds of sporting events around the world every year. Although a significant amount of the company's sports content is produced for viewing by subscribers of cable and satellite television providers, some of the content is not intended to be shown on live TV and may be edited into video clips for viewing online or on mobile devices such as iPhones, iPads and Android devices.

Content produced for viewing by consumers online can be monetized via advertising, but the process of capturing, encoding, editing and publishing video clips from hundreds of events a year can be a time consuming process requiring tens of thousands of man-hours for video editing and publishing.

The integrated platform enables the company to capture live broadcast feeds in the cloud, and then quickly edit and publish short video clips from sports events and distribute them online, often in a matter of minutes.

Insights from Gus Elliott of Universal Sports - In an interview conducted on February 23, 2013 with Gus Elliott, Director of Streaming Operations for Universal Sports, Elliott described the often tedious processes involved with getting clips of sporting events edited and distributed to the company's website and to other online media outlets.

"We essentially had an editor sitting in our studio in Los Angeles watching live recordings of sports content from all around the world. Universal Sports often features video content from very niche events such as alpine skiing or Chinese divers or rugby matches. The editor would have to watch the live feed, capture and edit particular clips of interesting highlights and manually publish them to the Universal Sports website and to media sites such as NBC Sports, Yahoo! and video sites and social networking platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. This process could take as long as 30 minutes or sometimes as long as two hours," according to Elliott.

Not only was the production process extremely time consuming for video editors, the delay in getting video content posted online was also resulting in an opportunity cost from lost advertising revenues. Oftentimes, unauthorized or pirated copies of video clips from sporting events to which Universal Sports owned the rights would be posted online on sites such as YouTube. Many of these clips would be posted before the official versions from Universal Sports would be made available, resulting in lost advertising revenue opportunities for the company.

An additional challenge the firm faced was the relocation of certain production facilities from Los Angeles to Denver. Some team members were to be staying in LA and the company needed a way for video editors and content publishers to edit and distribute content from any of the company's facilities, without creating any additional bottlenecks or production delays.

The Solution

Universal Sports deployed a cloud-based video platform for capturing and editing live video streams from anywhere in the world, with seamless integration into the firm's Brightcove platform for publishing video content on the universalsports.com website. The firm's video editors can also use the new cloud solution to distribute video content to other online video platforms and to sites such as YouTube and Yahoo!

The integrated platform enables the company to capture live broadcast feeds in the cloud, and then quickly edit and publish short video clips from sports events and distribute them online, often in a matter of minutes. Delivering content in a timely fashion is critical. The first version of breaking news will generally be the one most frequently referenced and utilized on YouTube and other sites.

Being first provides some protection from illegal copies as well. With YouTube's Content ID system, if Universal Sports gets its video clips posted quickly on YouTube, even if other pirated videos from other sources are posted, Universal Sports can benefit from the monetization from ad revenues from views of even those clips as well.

"With this platform, our video content can be posted so quickly, often in about five minutes, that we are almost always the first ones to post content from the sports events we're covering. This can result in significant financial benefits for the company from advertising revenues," reports Elliott.

Key Benefits Achieved

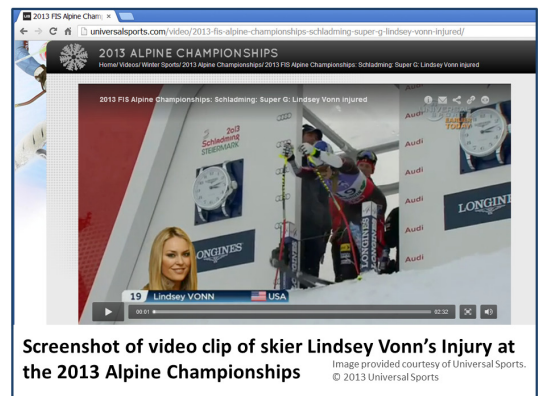
Universal Sports may have established the new baseline in fast turnaround. They own the broadcast rights to the 2013 FIS Alpine World Ski Championships and covered the Super G event in early February. It was during this event that skier Lindsey Vonn suffered her season-ending injury resulting from a fall during the event. Universal Sports was able to post a video clip, including audio, of Vonn's dramatic crash within minutes of the occurrence. While this particular content is distressing, it demonstrates the ability to provide consumers the most current and newsworthy information possible.

Universal Sports utilizes its suite of cloud-based video editing tools to capture and edit video content almost in real time. It can now post content on its site and on other sites in as little as five minutes for high-priority content, compared to as long as an hour or two with the previous approach. In addition, clips can be quickly distributed to other outlets for additional monetization from pre-roll ads.

As of mid-February 2013, the clip of the Lindsey Vonn injury had generated more than a quarter of a million play starts on the Brightcove player. The company has a system in place that enables it to turn around video footage from sporting events around the world in a fraction of the time it used to take. It can also easily create and distribute video clips from hundreds of sporting events each year for monetization from video advertising online and on mobile devices.

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GUS ELLIOTT
DIRECTOR OF STREAMING OPERATIONS
UNIVERSAL SPORTS



Screenshot of video clip of skier Lindsey Vonn's Injury at the 2013 Alpine Championships
Image provided courtesy of Universal Sports.
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