A Bill of Rights for Media Without Bounds

As video makes the transition into a type of data that flows through the conduits of wider and more pervasive digital pipelines, broadcasters and video professionals are recognizing that they have the opportunity to become Digicasters*: providers of high-caliber programming that can be easily repurposed for any transmission network, protocol, or output format, and the source of content-rich experiences for advertisers and viewers alike.*

Since the Grass Valley Group's introduction of this concept last summer, the worldwide availability of digital pipelines has accelerated, making them much more affordable. The issue now for broadcasters that are making the transition to digicasting is what to do with these pipelines once they gain access to them.

***

It's The Content

Understanding how broadcasters and video professionals can profit in a digital world is as easy as turning on a television set. Go ahead, try it. What do you see? Do you like it? So change the channel. Is that better? Good. Because at the end of the day, whether it's scanning cable channels or surfing the Internet, we're all looking for *something.* For information. For a laugh. For inspiration. And despite all the known and new ways of delivering video, it's not the medium that keeps us coming back.

It's the content.

Content is what informs, entertains, and compels. Content is what wins viewers, bolsters ratings, and secures advertisers. Content is the key to unlocking the value of the exploding bandwidth of an increasingly digital world.

Video is a huge growth opportunity, and one for which these content creators are perfectly suited. Because no one knows more about assembling, branding, marketing, and delivering high-caliber content than these experts.

Certain, Inalienable Rights

In their transition to digicasting, however, broadcasters and other content creators must overcome many challenges to fully tap the opportunities presented by new and multiple digital distribution media and to stake their claims in new and emerging markets such as such as D-Cinema, Xtreme retailing, and business conferencing. As they invest in surmounting these challenges, broadcasters must lay claim to certain inalienable rights from their equipment manufacturers—rights that will leave them truly free to flourish within a rapidly expanding digital universe. Rights that will afford them access to new technologies, strategic partners, and ways of doing business to increase the value of their networks to advertisers and viewers alike.

Taken together, these rights represent nothing less than the guarantee to access, create, manipulate, query, and distribute digital assets across any media, at any time, and from anywhere. The right to Media Without Bounds™.

(1) *The right to be connected to the world.* Content providers should enjoy unfettered access to any digital pipeline they deem necessary, without being limited by its underlying technologies for transporting text, audio, video, photographs, graphics, or other data.
(2) *The right to the most flexible technology infrastructure possible.* The tools that enable content providers to access, create, manipulate, query, and distribute their work must support the formats, resolutions, and protocols necessary for them to do so—and elegantly extend themselves to embrace new standards as they emerge. Moreover, these tools must work together to create efficient and nimble infrastructures that let organizations devote even greater resources to developing content for delivery through new and existing digital media.

(3) *The right to instantly locate and obtain digital assets wherever they reside.* It's reasonable to expect digital assets to be scattered across geographies, media, and software applications. It is just as reasonable, therefore, that a content provider be able to search, locate, and put to use those assets regardless of their location, storage format, or application of origin.

(4) *The right to distribute any content—video, audio, browse quality video, text, and whatever others they have available—across all available media types and without equipment hindrances.* Distribution pipelines are a content creator's lifeline. Thus they have the right to demand that equipment providers offer hardware, software, and other technologies that support the widest possible spectrum of distribution opportunities for their content.

(5) *The right to control the quality of an end product through ingest, emission, and retransmission, no matter the destination.* As content providers succeed and fail by the strength of their end products, they should expect that their work appear at its destination exactly as intended, whether it's distributed over the air, via satellite, or across a computer network.

(6) *The right to create the most profitable business model possible, and modify it at any time.* The malleable nature of digital information offers the opportunity to package video for a variety of audiences and devices. To maintain the viability and profitability these distribution channels—and to create new ones—content provider must be able to make changes to their basic business models without concern for their core technological infrastructures.

Media Without Bounds: Freedom of Choice

The idea of Media Without Bounds is based on a belief that content creators need the freedom to access, create, and distribute content whether they are in the same building or across the world, and that niggling technological details should not limit that freedom—that there be no boundaries imposed by format, resolution, protocol, or geography.

To enable that freedom of choice, the Grass Valley Group has focused its Media Without Bounds initiative efforts around three key areas that encompass all facets of content creation and distribution: *Media Software*, which enables widespread media access and centralized device monitoring and control; *Media Connectivity*, which bridges the worlds of traditional video routing and standard computer networks; and *Media Platforms* which provide video storage, production, and manipulation while supporting multiple formats and resolutions and open architectures necessary to meet both the current and future needs of content creators. Guiding the software, hardware, and technology developments in all these areas is a long-standing recognition of the Internet as the foundation for entirely new commercial enterprises, and that true freedom for content providers means leveraging their work across new, developing, and as-yet unseen markets built upon Internet-related technologies.

Those efforts and that recognition are already paying off. In the area of Media Software, the Grass Valley Group offers ContentShare™ Explorer, a browser-like application built on standard Internet technologies that makes managing storehouses of digital media assets as easy using the World Wide Web. It also includes NetCentral, an SNMP-based software package for remote, centralized device monitoring and configuration has the capabilities to proactively check and report on the health of the Grass Valley Group's next-generation of servers, switchers, routers, and modular products, maximizing device uptime and maintenance engineering budgets.

As for Media Connectivity, the company has embarked upon a series of initiatives to dramatically boost the scalability of its routers while simultaneously slashing their control-panel costs and configuration times, continues to expand its modular line with open, interoperable products that provide a smooth transition from analog to standard- to high-definition digital signal processing, and is making a

significant investment to bridge the worlds of traditional video routing and computer networks via Internet technologies.

In the area platforms, the Profile® XP Media Platform, is the most open, supporting JPEG, MPEG, DVCPro, and HDTV formats as well as standard-definition (SD) and high-definition (HD) signals. Through its integrated ContentShare technologies, it hosts more Internet Protocol (IP) content than any other video server. And with its new Web publishing capabilities, content creators such as news organizations can use the platform to create on-air and online versions of their programming in a centralized, near-simultaneous fashion to create a brand whose up-to-date quality exists regardless of medium. Coupled with a new series of hardware and software options centered around MPEG Transport Steam (MTS) and Serial Digital Transport Interface (SDTI) technologies that allow faster-than-real-time transfers of material between and within facilities respectively, the platform will continue to lower the cost of creating content while increasing its quality throughout a distribution chain.

Conclusion: The Future is Digicasting

America Online merges with Time Warner. NBC creates an online division. The National Basketball Association launches its own a 24-hour broadcast channel. The opportunity for content creators in a digital world is unrivaled since the inception of video. Yet those opportunities are emerging and shifting very, very quickly, across a landscape in which video, telecommunications, and computing technologies are converging; where media conglomerates are becoming *multimedia* conglomerates that will, in turn, become *omnimedia* conglomerates; and where simply having a distribution channel means nothing, but controlling content is everything.

Yet the opportunities abound. For television networks seeking to win back viewers by offering enhanced online capabilities and information-enhanced digital broadcasts. For Internet portals looking to deliver an even more content-rich experience to their technology-savvy users. For owners of phone lines, satellites, and fiber rights-of-way looking to become the one-stop source of connectivity between a content creator and a content consumer.

What these new and emerging companies will demand is the ability to instantly recast their content for whatever medium they see fit, to centralize its production and

distribution for maximum operational efficiency, and, above all, to control its quality whether its destination is a big screen above Times Square or a small one in the palm of your hand. Which is why broadcasters are no longer the only customers of the Grass Valley Group.

Digicasters are.