



Cadent Accelerates Media Processing of National Spots for Cross-Platform Distribution using Vantage

How Cadent Network significantly boosted productivity by automating with the Vantage Media Processing Platform from Telestream

“To stay competitive in the advertising business, we need to deliver media that is consistently on-time and high-quality.

So we needed a solution that would scale with our company’s growth in a stepladder fashion. With Vantage, we’ve been able to scale the platform incrementally to support our growing workload without interruption.

I’m very pleased with the system’s reliability and rapid return on investment. Vantage is the backbone of our operation.”

–Joe Kovach, Vice President of Technical Operations for Cadent, in Philadelphia, PA.

As a leading provider of media, advertising technology and data solutions for the pay TV industry, Cadent has helped advance the TV media landscape for the last 20+ years. They have relationships with top MVPDs, broadcasters, and advertising agencies, with a footprint of over 140 million households worldwide.

Cadent Network, the company’s media services arm, provides an efficient national television media solution for advertisers across cable and broadcast. Their other division, Cadent Technology, is the global leader of advertising solutions that help pay TV providers monetize video delivered to any screen at any time. Cadent Technology’s technical operations team supports both divisions, and focuses on the continued development of addressable, cross-platform advertising and data technology.

Cadent has many resources at its disposal to help major advertisers develop strategic advertising campaigns that cost-effectively reach their target audience. But in the deadline-intense advertising business, one resource Cadent doesn’t have in abundance is time.

The Challenge

From the moment a spot arrives at its network operations center (NOC) in Mount Laurel, NJ, Cadent technicians know the clock is ticking. A massive influx of media files must be transcoded, timed, checked, slated, and captioned, among other things, in time to meet hard delivery deadlines.

With the workload growing exponentially, Cadent needed to migrate to an automated file-based workflow that would enable a much faster turnaround. The solution they chose is the Vantage Transcode Pro Media Processing Platform from Telestream.

The Background

Eight years ago, the company relied on a tape-based workflow in its network operations center. Everything needed to be done manually, including prepping and labeling tapes and filling out overnight shipping labels. With this time-consuming, laborious approach, meeting deadlines was always a concern.

At that time, Kovach and his team also began to see an uptick in the number of electronic files they were receiving, and believed they would be more competitive by shifting to an automated, file-based workflow that would boost their productivity and handle a greater volume of business.

While Cadent occasionally deals with long-form programs, such as infomercials, 97% of the incoming files are currently short-form 15, 30, 60 and 120-second spots that arrive electronically. The Cadent business model of buying and placing media is based upon its national footprint, access to a large spot inventory in top-rated programs, and strategic relationships with:

- 600 TV stations in the top 210 Nielsen local TV markets
- 80 Broadcast and cable networks
- 20 Hispanic networks
- 200 Pay TV providers
- 300 Advertisers and advertising agencies

With sales offices in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York, Cadent also offers their clients a data-driven approach to reaching a brand's true target with an audience indexing solution that makes strategic shifts in media plans to incorporate an intelligent ranking of networks, programs and dayparts.

The Solution

To ensure that deadlines would be consistently and reliably met, and that their media processing capabilities would keep pace with company growth, the first step Cadent took was to adopt Telestream Flip Factory, a predecessor to Vantage that they used for file-based transcoding. At that time, about six years ago, there were five technicians working at the Cadent NOC, which was processing about 38,000 spots or files annually.

Four years ago, they upgraded from Flip Factory to the more powerful and advanced Vantage Transcode Pro, and steadily expanded their transcoding capabilities as their workload grew. Today, Cadent has the following Telestream gear:

- Four Vantage Transcode Pro licenses
- Four Lightspeed servers providing GPU acceleration
- A Nielsen encoding plugin
- Post Producer, used primarily for adding slates to front of spots
- Two Pipeline systems for real-time ingest of video from tapes
- CaptionMaker and MacCaption desktop closed captioning software

“By the end of 2016, we determined that our media processing volume was 500,000+ files annually, compared to just 38,000 six years ago. And our turnaround time to distribute a group of 100 spots decreased from 24 hours down to two. So, with the same five-member team, we’re now able to ingest, process and deliver a much higher volume of media because of the automated workflow enabled by the Vantage Media Processing Platform.”

The Workflow

At Cadent, source media arrives in a variety of file formats that need to be transcoded. Vantage performs many essential, automated tasks to process this media including:

- Automatically identifying media files that need to be transcoded
- Executing automated workflow instructions
- Converting between ProRes, H.264, MPEG2, MPEG4 and other common formats
- Performing media analysis for quality control
- Generating low-res proxies of full-res media
- Adding Nielsen watermarks (using the optional Nielsen plug-in)

Cadent technicians can view the status of all of the workflows across the operation on a 65-inch multiviewer that serves as a dashboard. This gives them visibility over how things are moving throughout the complex, multilayered infrastructure.

This includes a proprietary browser-based technology that Cadent built and deployed to support applications, such as customer service, production and management. External clients, such as advertising agencies can use this portal to place orders, access media in Cadent's database and perform other activities. And Cadent's own internal departments can access media, such as low-res proxies, that they need for creative and production tasks.

“By creating this multilayered infrastructure, people can use the portal to access the media they need without actually gaining access to—or posing any risks to—our core, mission critical Vantage and CatDV systems. It was important to us that the Vantage platform has hooks that allow our engineers to build on and extend the platform to suit our needs.”



Vantage's visual workflow design

This proprietary layer resides on top of the Vantage platform, and interfaces seamlessly with it by virtue of leveraging the APIs that Telestream provides so customers can extend its capabilities. When media comes in via the web portal that needs transcoding, it lands in a watch folder where it's automatically picked up and processed by Vantage.

It also interfaces seamlessly with a CatDV video content server database (from Square Box Systems Ltd), which Cadent uses as its central media asset library and archive. Because of this interconnectivity, Vantage and CatDV also share a unified workflow.

The Results

In terms of quantifiable results, Cadent Network has realized the following benefits by shifting to an automated, file-based transcoding workflow:

- A steady productivity increase from 38,000 files processed annually to 500,000+ over a six-year timeframe
- Timesavings throughout the operation, including a faster, two-hour turnaround time to process 100 spots, compared to the 24-hour turnaround that was typical before Vantage
- Operational efficiencies throughout the media processing workflow
- No need to increase its NOC staff to process and manage the upsurge in media files

“With Vantage as the backbone of our infrastructure, we have seen an obvious OPEX benefit, including savings from reduced overhead. I would say that we saw a return on investment in Vantage and Lightspeed in about three years, and I’m very comfortable with that.”

Future Roadmap

At a time when viewers can watch TV content anytime and anyplace, Cadent has a cross-platform model that can help the pay TV industry execute targeted advertising across:

- National cable and broadcast television (Linear)
- IP streaming platforms (Linear and VOD)
- Video-on-demand (QAM and IP)
- Online/digital platforms
- Over-the-Top (OTT) services

The company’s future roadmap consists of continuing to focus on solutions that push the envelope of data-driven dynamic ad insertion for all screens, any platform and every audience.

To learn more

To get more information about Telestream or products mentioned, call 1-530-470-1300, or visit www.telestream.net



Lightspeed servers accelerate media processing

“We are confident that our Vantage transcoding platform meets our needs today, that it will scale easily to support our growth tomorrow, and that we can expand its capabilities to take advantage of opportunities that may arise in the future.”