CASE**STUDY**

:mediaproxy

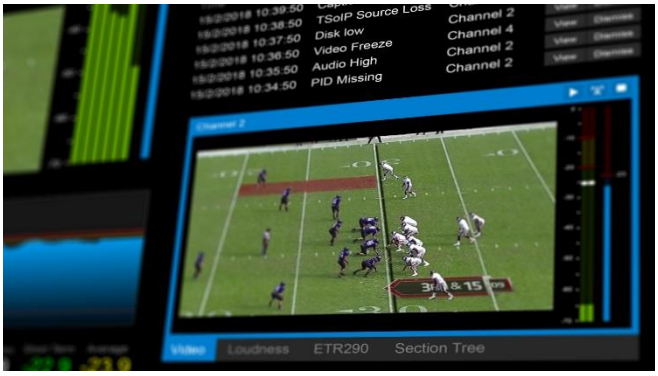
Installing and expanding Mediaproxy compliance monitoring for AMC Networks International Central and Northern Europe

About AMC Networks International

AMC Networks International (AMCNI) is the global distribution division of US cable operator and entertainment media group AMC Networks Inc. Its activities are divided across different regional territories, each with a dedicated operating unit handling multiple television channels broadcasting targeted programming, in specific languages, to countries within its region. Each channel is available on a variety of platforms to multiple devices, calling for extensive compliance monitoring to ensure output conforms to different regulatory standards and provides a consistent level of quality for viewers.

AMCNI Central and Northern Europe, which covers 14 nations including Germany, the Czech Republic, Serbia, Slovenia and Ukraine, updated its logging and analysis system four years ago with the installation of a Mediaproxy LogServer monitor and analyzer. It is now in the process of expanding this set-up to accommodate new services.

From its broadcast center in the Hungarian capital of Budapest, AMCNI Central and Northern Europe distributes themed services with a specific focus on mid and eastern Europe. Each channel is programed for its local audience in their own language and is available in various formats, including HD, to a range of platforms, such as linear TV and mobile devices.



Ensuring Compliance

As is standard practice, all this output was monitored and recorded for broadcast compliance but by 2015 the system previously used by AMCNI for that purpose was no longer being supported by its manufacturer. The broadcaster began researching possible replacements and contacted Hungarian distributor and systems integrator Silicon Computers. Also based in Budapest, Silicon

Computers was founded in 1995 to handle distribution of the Silicon Graphics product range in Hungary. It now represents other leading brands and is the local reseller for Mediaproxy's logging, monitoring and analysis systems.

Mediaproxy produces a range of software and IP-based compliance technologies that can be used to monitor multiple streams along the distribution chain as well as in master control rooms. Working with Silicon Computers, AMCNI's broadcast IT technicians selected Mediaproxy's LogServer SDI server recording 6-channels during the spring of 2015. This allowed technical operators to familiarize themselves with the numerous features offered by the Mediaproxy multi-channel monitoring software. Broadcast IT specialist László Pandur explains that “the SDI model of LogServer was selected so that it could interface with AMCNI's existing Imagine Communications playout servers during initial testing”.

LogServer Enables Faster and More Efficient Working Practices

When this evaluation period proved successful and AMCNI was satisfied that LogServer met its requirements, a full IP system was installed at the end of 2015. LogServer TSoIP and LogServer SDI are currently recording 32 IP channels and six-channels of SDI, with the latter version taking a direct output of AMCNI's playout set-up. The outputs of the Imagine Communications SDI and Pebble Beach Systems IP playout servers run through AMCNI's video headend, streams from which are logged by LogServer TSoIP. Both LogServer systems process As-Run log files from the playout devices, making it possible to assign a schedule to the recorded programs. This in turn assists operators in finding material faster and more efficiently.

László Pandur comments that “although the day-to-day function of LogServer is very simple, it is able to run in different modes according to the job of the person using it. We use the system to prove to the commercials trade agencies that an ad was on-air on a particular channel as part of its daily playlist. It is also used to send feedback to the Hungarian Media Authority. In doing this, there are two separate user profiles: the super-user, for engineers; and a more basic version for channel managers, schedulers and commercials coordinators. The engineers use LogServer to check the playout and encoding system for any problems. The other users can only check the channels and the content."

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>
> László Pandur, Broadcast IT Specialist

Access to the LogServer system for all users is through its leading edge LogPlayer HTML5 web browser interface, which provides transparent access across all channels from all compliance servers via it's unique cross-linking functionality. This way users are able to download an item, such as a commercial or a section of a film, from the daily playlist.

LogServer is a software-based IP-based program for logging, monitoring and analyzing digital transmissions on a wide variety of platforms. Since its first introduction LogServer has been updated and upgraded on a regular basis. It now conforms to the SMPTE ST 2022-6 and ST 2110 standards and supports the Ember+ control protocol. This last feature enhances both the monitor automation and redundancy capabilities of the system. Among other recent developments designed to increase the scope and power of LogServer is exception-based monitoring, which uses IP penalty boxes. These allow broadcasters and MSOs (multiple system operators) working at scale to deal with QC and compliance more efficiently.

Specific LogServer features that have been of particular benefit to AMCNI's operators are the integral DVB subtitle and loudness monitoring functions. These are used to check the broadcast content of programs, with the ability to search for insertion points in relation to closed captions and check that audio levels comply with standards such as ATSC A/85 and EBU R128.

"AMCNI came to us with very specific needs for their compliance operation," says Zsolt Szoke, systems engineer at Silicon Computers. "We worked very closely with them to select the right form of LogServer and went through a comprehensive trial process to ensure that it did exactly what they wanted."

Plans for Expansion

AMCNI is once more in the process of expanding its LogServer installation. This will accommodate new services the broadcaster is putting on air, which, as with existing channels, will also have to be recorded for compliance purposes. Work was completed at the end of December 2019, with the possibility of extending the system further if AMCNI's operations and business continue to grow in the future.

"The AMCNI installation has proved to be very rewarding, with the client and our technology partner, Silicon Computers, working together to find exactly the right solution," comments Rajesh Patel, SVP of Solutions EMEA of Mediaproxy. "We look forward to continuing our engineering relationship as AMCNI's operation grows in the future."