

Case Study: Hearst Networks

Hearst Networks EMEA Modernizes Content Supply Chain With SDVI and AWS

International broadcast leader leverages the cloud to optimize supply chain operations and drive smarter, more efficient content distribution workflows.

Summary

To modernize its operations, Hearst Networks EMEA migrated its content supply chain to the cloud. Committing both to technical transformation and to process innovation, the organization and its existing personnel deployed the SDVI Rally media supply chain management platform on AWS cloud. This expansive and radical change encompasses every step in the Hearst Networks EMEA supply chain, every third-party system with which information is exchanged, and numerous discrete systems. Through a truly integrated cloud-based supply chain and data-driven automated workflows, the organization has brought exceptional control, flexibility, and speed to its content preparation and distribution operations.

The Situation

To be more responsive to market demand and business opportunity without scaling up personnel, Hearst Networks EMEA (formerly A+E Networks EMEA) undertook a modernization of its content supply chain. Because existing infrastructure, originally deployed in 2016, was no longer sufficient to provide essential capacity and agility, the organization began the migration of its media supply chain to the cloud.

In making this transformation, the organization faced several challenges: moving from siloed operations to a truly integrated supply chain; automating and streamlining workflows with metadata-driven intelligence; implementing a pull-based content provisioning model with distribution partners. As part of the project,

Hearst Networks EMEA also sought to better support supplier diversity with a loosely coupled and repeatable integration design; remove duplicate or redundant storage and QC cycles; and improve the user experience across the operations team.

International broadcaster **Hearst Networks EMEA**, formerly known as A+E Networks EMEA, operates across the UK, Europe, Middle East, and Africa. Hearst Networks EMEA today operates 29 linear channels and 20 SVOD services, all tailored locally for different countries and cultures.

The Solution

To tackle these challenges, Hearst Networks EMEA implemented Amazon Web Services (AWS) cloud and the SDVI Rally media supply chain management platform. Together, these technologies facilitated connection of all supply chain elements, as well as the consolidation of data in a single repository. Addressing end-to-end supply chain operations, the Rally platform leverages metadata and the power of the AWS cloud to automate and streamline workflows for long-form content sourcing, processing, localization, enrichment, storage, and distribution.

The media supply chain at Hearst Networks EMEA handles content preparation for 29 linear feeds and 60 VOD platforms, with content in 24 languages. The migration of this media supply chain began with the use of AWS S3 storage for the content archive. Then, Hearst Networks EMEA took Rally — and integrations with in-house scheduling and management systems — live to handle all incoming content from production companies, distributors, and acquisition parties. Rally-managed workflows for content going out to distribution partners and platforms then were developed, tested, and launched.

In the Hearst Networks EMEA supply chain design, Rally orchestrates and manages all ingest processing once content arrives in the organization's AWS S3 bucket, matching source files with placeholders and associating secondary language audio dubs or captions with the original content files. Within Rally, content is transcoded into a common format and quality checked using an automated QC tool. Approved content flows automatically through the supply chain, undergoing further processing and packaging depending on its intended destination. Content flagged with potential issues is routed to operators for manual inspection. Processed content is then placed in another S3 storage bucket, from which distribution partners, such as playout and VOD services, can pull finished packages. Versioning and localization partners also access the content from the same cloud storage location as needed to perform compliance and language tasks.

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– Jan-Hendrik Hein, Hearst Networks EMEA

The Result

Through migration of its media supply chain to the cloud, Hearst Networks EMEA has done more than implement state-of-the-art content preparation and delivery; the company has embraced collaboration driven by technology, ultimately demonstrating an innovative approach to supply chain modernization.

Hearst Networks EMEA worked closely with Sky and A+E Networks U.S. to build out the business case for reimagining the organization's media supply chain, and the company used real-world findings from those two partners as a model. The resulting media supply chain modernization project built on AWS cloud and SDVI Rally was delivered by a joint project team from SDVI, Hearst Networks EMEA and consultants, and the scale and extent of transformation have been radical.

Using Rally to automate content corrections and transformations, including preparing content for distribution, Hearst Networks EMEA has streamlined workflows and minimized manual tasks.

A+E Networks U.S. has managed its supply chain under Rally since 2023, providing metadata that automatically matches content to workflow placeholders, sends it through validation, and automates QC processes before human intervention. QC data from A+E Networks U.S. allows Hearst Networks EMEA to prevalidate incoming content and reduce duplicate work, saving time, effort, and cost. With automation of

the ingest workflow at Hearst Networks EMEA, content from the U.S. arriving in the evening can be processed overnight and ready for operators in the morning, accelerating this critical workflow by six to ten hours.

“Rally has enabled us to shift from siloed operations to an integrated cloud-based supply chain with which we’re realizing the increased flexibility, speed, and control we need to support our EMEA operations,” says Jan-Hendrik Hein, Vice President of Media Operations at Hearst Networks EMEA. “Data-driven automated workflows have already allowed us to reduce repetitive manual tasks significantly and free up skilled operators to focus on where they can add even greater value. As content comes in from suppliers, for example, we’ve reduced the manual touches across the workflow from sixteen to just four.”

Time-based metadata further optimizes content management for the organization, freeing staff to focus on value-added tasks. For example, while localization was once tracked manually, it will now automate through Rally, which creates language packs, sends them to the service provider, and tracks job completion. Content for playout will also be automated, with most playout partners responsible for pulling the content. Cumulatively, automation throughout key processes gives Hearst Networks EMEA the agility to meet market demands without increasing staff.

By improving visibility and data sharing, Rally enables key operational departments to stay engaged and collaborate in driving further organizational transformation. As a result, finance, operations, and other departments enjoy ready access to up-to-date information, reducing the need for emails, reliance on spreadsheets, and duplication of routine management tasks. With improved supply



chain visibility and reporting, the finance team can better track content processed by Rally or third-party apps, such as transcoding and QC, and monitor costs by show or asset. Compliance personnel can access and approve content directly, while the acquisitions team can track extra transcoding or QC steps and reconcile costs with third-party distributors.

“Bringing our supply chain into a cloud-native, SaaS platform was a key part of unlocking greater transparency, flexibility, and simplicity and to connect across our technology and partners,” says Matt Westrup, CTO for Hearst Networks EMEA. “With Rally we are achieving that, meaning we can be more data-driven, more automated — and ultimately that delivers time back to our talented teams to do what they do best.”

Lessons Learned

For Hearst Networks EMEA, the reimagining of the organization’s media supply chain was more than a technology project; it also involved business culture, change management, skills development, and communication. While internal teams became experts and established new routines, the organization also focused on identifying the right team resourcing, with the right skillsets, roles, and capabilities. All along this journey, being prepared to change the plan and to adapt to unforeseen circumstances also proved vital to the project’s success.

For further information, visit www.sdvi.com, or email us at info@sdvi.com