

AdPulse Next Generation Experience

White Paper

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Executive Overview

As the advertising market becomes invested in advanced advertising, a change is needed for the AdPulse and future SeaChange advertising systems. This change will focus on the separation of duties for users which will allow companies to maintain control over how they do their business.

Current Standing

AdPulse is meant to be an end-to-end solution for the cable industry that will allow them to dynamically insert ads

into VOD content. The AdPulse system today covers two areas of the Video on Demand (VOD) ad sales business: Campaign Management and Ad Placement.

UI Architecture

The AdPulse system currently consists of many software components that make ad insertion possible. For all of these components, there is currently one Administrative interface that allows users to configure settings, create campaigns, and manage VOD and Ad assets. Figure 1 shows a diagram of the current UI Architecture.

Figure 1

From the SeaChange AdPulse sales information:

SeaChange Ad Pulse System consists of two parts that include:

- *An advertising and inventory management system called the SeaChange AdPulse On Demand Ad Manager*
- *A package of enhancements for your core VOD system called SeaChange® Axiom® Content Dynamics, that provide functions tailored to the special needs of managing, propagating, playing out, and tracking ads. After all, ads aren't just like movies. Movies don't need point-of-payout splicing, ad insertion decision logic, or detailed usage tracking. But ads do.*

Workflows

One of the troublesome areas for introducing a new product to the industry is defining the workflow that will need to take place to make such a complicated system work. The following workflows were created to understand our current workflow and the pain areas to those workflows.

Campaign Setup

Initially getting a campaign to run requires two areas to converge: the VOD assets and the Ad Assets (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Pain Points:

- Asset Ingest with SCTE-35 splice markers
- Modifying existing assets to have splice markers
- Copy Ingest
- Manageable Asset Grouping
- Only one kind of selling (inventory)

Monitoring/Issue Resolution

Figure 3

Pain Points:

- Ownership of monitoring
 - Different types of monitoring in one location (example: If a campaign issue comes up and the VOD Operator sees it on the alerts page – what is the right thing for them to do?)
 - Active vs. Passive monitoring
- Checking Issue Resolution
 - Within AdPulse – is the right ad playing now? Not sure – no playlist to check it.
 - Within AdAgent – no UI to check issues beyond Manutil

Reporting

Figure 4

Pain Points:

- Understandable Reports
- Calculating Billing Amount
- Charging Customers
- Report setup and aggregation

Usability Issues

Communication Lines. In the field, we saw a lot of manual and e-mail based communication between the ad business (sales) and the technical sides. In a real-time system this may not be fast enough for information transfer of schedule changes and problems. How can we support the communications between these two parties?

Reporting. Prior participants have felt that reporting did not meet their needs regardless of their role in the organization. Many participants have resorted to home-grown reports to get the information they need, but recognize that the presentation and ease of running these reports would be simplified if they were integrated into the products. More integrated reporting should be considered to allow both VOD operators and Ad Businesspeople to report statistics, prepare billing, and/or identify sales opportunities.

Billing. The link from reporting to billing today is non-existent and relies on the sales, traffic, and billing departments to create a workflow that supports VOD advertising with other products that do not integrate with AdPulse. Creating ways to allow data exports or connections between outside billing and internal reporting could ease the roadblocks in the current workflows.

Copy Weighting. Currently AdPulse just plays out each item in copy group in rotation. More control should be given to the traffic coordinators for weighting different items, therefore forcing them to play more than others.

Asset Management. Ad and Program asset management is cumbersome given the different tools needed to manage these items. Putting the management burden on the VOD Operator end and the information/scheduling burden on

the Ad Business end could alleviate some of these problems. Allowing for fast winnowing of data could make management of these large amounts of data easier.

Slot Management. It is currently hard to identify sales opportunities that still exist in the system. AdPulse should recommend available slots that are still open for sales.

Ad Preview. Customers continually find it hard to preview ads. This functionality would help ensure that the ads being ordered for play-out are the correct ones. This is particularly useful when working with many ads that are very similar (differ only by a few seconds of video at the end) and while up complicated targeting for such ad variations.

A New Model

As a new model for AdPulse, the Campaign Manager will be discretely broken out from the ad insertion areas of the system.

Information Architecture

Figure 5

Campaign Manager Components

Contract Management

Enter key data of advertising contracts, and monitor their evolution to facilitate the planning, proposal and execution phases of a campaign using a consistent, trackable set of information that can be accessed by all permissioned users. Define, commit and measure ad campaign performance against contract data.

Targeting

Maximize revenue by targeting campaigns across audience groups defined with a consistent and robust set of criteria: geographic, demographic and psychographic. Include frequency-capping to ensure audiences will not tire of seeing repetitive ad messages.

Trafficking

Determine optimum performance with the ability to distinguish and rotate between various video ads that are part of same customer contracts. Add a real-time decision engine reading data from the Axiom data warehouse and the Subscriber database for finer targeting.

Sales Opportunities

Forecast and view accurate inventory-accounting so that the sales and operations team can easily determine the quantity of video inventory available as well as the specific slots available for sale across VOD markets.

Reporting

Compile reports quickly, with features that automatically track extensive campaign metrics and provide detailed reports on performance against contracts. Offer views into reports for various permissioned users. Offer possibility to download data in various formats to support existing systems.

Billing

Tie billing expectations into the reporting system. Offer possibility to download or export data in various formats to support existing systems. An option would be to export contracts and playout data into a separate database, spreadsheet, or accounting package.

AdPulse Components

Asset Management

Include within a new Asset Manager solution (plug-in for AM). This removes extra programs that the VOD

Operators need to access throughout the day to do their job. This would provide two areas:

Program Copy Management

This would also remove the need for a separate program area. Instead the plug-in could also allow a different view of the program copy to see AdPulse relevant information as well as the regular asset management displays.

Ad Copy Management

This would be similar to the Ad Copy plug-in that exists on Asset Manager today, but would allow for more extensive viewing and manipulation of the ad assets.

Recording System

Create easy ingest flow for the VOD content that will become inventory for AdPulse. Ensure that the avail and/or break marking of VOD content is seamless. Play while encode (PWE) may be another area to develop.

Quicksilver & DigitalX Transcoder

Easy ad ingest processes that links to the Campaign Manager. VOD Operators should be able to easily manage these assets. Ad Business should be able to easily view this content in ways that support their workflows. We should support industry standards for content ingest and communicating metadata.

Admin

Admin is part of the installation of AdPulse and will then be located as a configuration application off of VOD. VOD Operators will be able to access this to make global or site based modifications given adequate permissions.

Monitoring and Reports

Provide a way to ensure the system is running correctly and report on system statistics. Provide alerts or alarms when the system has a problem for quick identification and remedy.

Open Questions

- Who owns the break structure – VOD Ops, Trafficking, Content owners?

Expectation: Comes in with break markers for interior breaks, but does not define # of avails. Also does not define pre and post roll break/avails. Therefore – Content owners own interior breaks – trafficking owns avail and pre/post breaks?

- Should the break structure stay aligned with inventory or be a separate entity?

Expectation: Depending on the type of campaign management used this may be different. Example – if ads have a priority and are just marked as “Pre-Roll” you might have break structures per asset that define how many avails are in the pre-roll. If you have ads by assignment (today) you have to mark an ad for a specific slot and a defined break structure for all inventory is needed.

- Who owns the ingest of Ad Copy?
- What billing systems are currently in use? Where are the lines between the current Trafficking system and billing systems?
- What are the different ways the ad businesses would want to sell? How would this affect Inventory?

Steps to Advance the AdPulse Experience

Upcoming Research

Trials

The UX Team will perform usability studies as AdPulse is deployed into companies such as Virgin Media and Cox into their working environments. The specific plans for these studies will be created as the opportunities arise, but will focus on gathering comparable data that will help advance the user experience.

Evaluating Customer reviews

By talking to customers who are evaluating AdPulse as a solution within their business, we can begin to gather more information about their expectations of the current workflow and the areas of AdPulse that do not merge with their current business practices. Seeing why they think AdPulse is either a good addition to their business offerings or would need something more before it could be considered will help us find ways to make AdPulse more marketable for all potential customers.

Advertising UX Research

Interviews

Phone interviews will occur first to gain a base level of understanding around the daily tasks, job requirements, and needs of the different users. The phone interviews will focus on interviewing people across the user types to gather more varied (cross company, location, etc) data. Approximately 24 phone interviews are expected to happen in order to gather information from VOD Operators, Spot Operators, and Traffic Coordinators. Each interview will take 45 minutes and will contain one user as well as a facilitator and a recorder from the UX team. The questionnaires that will be used for the basis of these interviews will be created by the user experience team from the previous research, team questions, and organizational needs for information.

The information gathered through this activity will inform the site visit to allow us to gather the most valuable information in the most efficient way.

Site Visits

Site visits will allow us view VOD Ops, Spot Ops, and Traffic Coordinators at in their working environment. We are expecting to perform approximately 3 site visits given that 1 site visit would include all three of these user types. The site visits will last 3 days with one day dedicated to each user type. The final number of visits will be determined based on the information collected during the interviews.

These site visits will be comprised of the following activities that will enrich and extend the information gathered during the interviews. Activities that are currently targeted for the field study include: Contextual Inquiry, Focus Group, Card Sorting, and/or further Interviews.

Future Products

As future versions of the AdPulse Campaign Manager and/or Darwin go through their Ideation phases, these models should be kept in mind to shift towards a componentized system. The separation of the Ad Manager and VOD

enhancements will need to become more defined so that the use of a pure campaign manager would support a natural workflow between the VOD Operators and the Ad Business owners; each side having easy access to the information that matters to them.

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