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BROADCASTING AND PRODUCTION IN INDIA

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BROADCASTER

Punit Goenka

Zee has always symbolised magnanimity; the brand identity has always been crystal-clear. It is how Punit Goenka, the managing director and CEO of Zee Entertainment Enterprises, has pushed the boundaries of what is possible, by foraying into new territories year after year.

The broadcaster recently launched two new channels - Zee Bioskop in Indonesia and Zee Nung in Thailand. There's also a lot of local content being developed for its Middle East channels, Zee Alwan and Zee Aflam (Arabic). Furthermore, the network is also acquiring local content companies in some of the international markets.

"On the whole, we are taking Indian content global in line with our positioning of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is my family) and in partnership with the ethnic communities in these regions," says Punit Goenka, while adding that the company is also betting high on OTT deliveries in Europe and USA.

On the domestic front, the network is also looking at adding city-specific content using advanced technologies, adding social media and target segments with HD content, music and high impact reality shows such as Dance India Dance.

"ZEE is already a Media Motion Enterprise, which means that all content is handled digitally as files, and the location of content is irrelevant with respect to play-out and final delivery," he adds.

With high speed links, the network is in effect functioning as a private cloud with over 3 TB of measured data flows every day, preparing for a day in time when linear content will be replaced by on-demand shows. There are no simple formulas, short cuts to success, and Goenka has spent a career showing us just this.



BROADCASTER

Shreyams Kumar

Shreyams Kumar, the director of Mathrubhumi Printing and Publishing Company (MPPCL), may have entered the television business a bit late in the day, but he has made up for the lost time by investing in the latest broadcast technologies and bringing about a fresh approach to programming. The company launched Mathrubhumi News, a 24-hour Malayalam news channel and Kappa, a music channel last year.

"Mathrubhumi stands for credibility and hard news flows in our blood so the time of launch was inconsequential for us. We knew whenever we are ready we would hit the ground running," says Shreyams Kumar, the director of MPPCL, a group that publishes India's

TECHNOLOGIST

Amitabh Kumar

Amitabh Kumar heads the technology function for media conglomerate Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd. (ZEEL) and Dish TV India, which are part of the diversified Essel Group. Over the years, ZEE has seen its network grow steadily via fibres and satellites to more global destinations than any other network in Asia. This growth is a result of the strategic plans executed with precision under the leadership of Amitabh Kumar. This year, the network is expected to cross 100 channels with country- and region-specific deliveries, making its Noida broadcast facility, one of the largest in the world under one roof.

In fact, the year 2013-14 will be known in the history of ZEE's broadcast operations as a watershed year for many significant achievements, including the migration of all channels to file-based play-out and shifting regional TV channels on file based media by integrating all automation systems to a DIVA interface.

But the biggest breakthrough came in form of the seamless shift of Ten Sports operations from Dubai to Noida. The stakes were high considering that it involved change in encryption and ground decoders as well as migration of legacy content. The operational changeover included migration to full HD production and play-out, advanced file based media workflows, studios and interface to massive archival and retrieval systems. The rollout was really challenging because it involved migration of hundreds of thousands of hours of content from legacy systems and interface to diverse broadcast equipment.

The shifting of Ten Sports was widely reported in international press including the NAB 2014 with even seasoned industry observers applauding the precision and rapid pace of migration. The changeover started in July 2013 and was completed in September 2013 when the channels went live from

Noida Broadcast Centre of ZEE. Faith can move mountains provided it's powered by the right kind of people and the right measure of technology.



TECHNOLOGIST

Balaji Jagannathan

With the audiences for television networks being nibbled away by new forms of media platforms and newer video compression formats appearing on the horizon, Balaji Jagannathan, the president and CEO of RiverSilica, seems like the perfect person to meet up for a cup of coffee because this Bengaluru-based techie is developing the future of transcoding business.

His company has developed interesting algorithmic techniques that helps in accelerating transcoding, improving session volumes dynamically and preserving output video quality. His flagship technology Tru-Transcode comprises a collection of algorithms, which uses advanced mathematical modelling techniques to improve video transcoding performance and harnesses the processor infrastructure for optimising complexity and improving quality. It's called RiverSilica's Acceleration For Transcoding.

Further, there is Hierarchical Evaluation and Learning Machine (HELM), another part of the Tru-Transcode technique, which uses advanced mathematical models to understand spatial and motion information to accelerate transcoding and in simultaneously preserving incoming video quality, thus helping the output quality efficiency.

Lastly, there's a scene detection mechanism, which uses patent applied techniques for incoming video's scene variation to preserve outgoing video quality after accelerated transcoding, with superior bit rate management.

"Transcoding, essentially, need not have to get into one type of application. You've got purely online but you may want to manually manage the bitrates, or you may want to want to manage the frame rates, for example; so you've got all these parameters that keep going on. To do that, what one needs is some kind of an algorithmic technique that takes the information about decode and encode and then figure out how exactly we can manage or manipulate those information to get where we want to go," says Balaji Jagannathan, a visionary in his own right. He further added that his team spent nearly three years to put together these bunch of algorithms and are filing close to 11 patents in this area.