

RapidUsers

NAB Expands Show Video Coverage Online with Digital Rapids Transcode Manager

The User

National Association of Broadcasters (NAB)

The Challenge

fast, automated, high-quality transcoding for 'nearly live' online event coverage

The Solution

Digital Rapids Transcode Manager

"While almost anyone can now put their video on the web, doing so efficiently and automatically under the demands of on-site event coverage, and at such a high level of quality that even video-savvy viewers are impressed, requires a top-caliber solution..."

by Aaron Cullers, Manager, Convention Marketing, National Association of Broadcasters



For the 2009 NAB Show, the interactive and marketing teams at NAB set out to significantly expand our online video coverage of the event, increasing both the quantity and quality of content available on our website at www.nabshow.com. In essence, our goal was to serve as a web 2.0 newsroom, while also creating unique and dynamic content for consumption by the entire lifecycle.

In addition to our usual daily show highlights packages, we also produced feature segments from the exhibition floor hosted by 'on-air' talent; segments from NAB sessions, luncheons and keynotes; interviews; and after-hours and off-site clips to help convey the overall atmosphere of the NAB Show and its positive effects on not only Las Vegas, but the industry as a whole.

One of our key requirements for this project was timeliness. Not just ensuring that content was made available online as quickly as possible, but also creating an efficient workflow process that freed up our post-production team to continue creating upcoming segments, and not necessarily focusing on the encoding process for the web and mobile platforms. Similarly, we wanted to minimize the effort required by our website staff. For these efforts, we relied upon Digital Rapids' Transcode Manager software on-site for the encoding, and this decision insured that we were going to achieve exceptional efficiency, performance and automation for the project.

Once the footage captured by our roving production teams was edited, the finished segments were transferred to the Transcode Manager system over a local network. The Digital Rapids software accepted final source files from a variety of post-production systems with ease — important to us because of the collaborative effort of our editing teams.

High definition (1080i) source files in Avid DNxHD and Apple ProRes formats were transferred to a 'watch folder' monitored by the Transcode Manager software. Upon arrival of new files, Transcode Manager automatically transcoded them into the formats required for our website (using H.264 compression for our Adobe Flash-based video player) and mobile distribution. Some of the content was intended only for the web, so automated rules were set up following a naming convention used by the editors. Based on the input filename, Transcode Manager knew whether to encode and deliver for both web and mobile delivery, or just for the web.

Transcode Manager then automatically transferred the encoded files by FTP to our content delivery network (CDN) provider for the project, Highwinds, who hosted the clips for audience delivery through the NAB Show website. Transcode Manager then sent an e-mail notification to our web administrator with a link to the newly posted video clip, ready for linking into the website. Transcode Manager also uploaded the mobile-encoded clips to our mobile delivery partner, HipCricket, when appropriate.

The level of automation was outstanding – the editor simply copied the edited video clip into a folder, and a few minutes later, our web administrator had an e-mail with the link to simply add to the website. All of this happened without any manual interaction with the Digital Rapids system. While the folks from Digital Rapids were a pleasure to work with, it’s a testament to the Transcode Manager software that we didn’t need them to hang around – it all worked flawlessly.

All of this efficiency, of course, would mean little if the resulting video wasn’t of high visual quality. The NAB Show is the leading event in the broadcast and media industry, encompassing the top tier of business and technology. It was important that the quality of the online video be consistent with that brand image, and again, Digital Rapids’ Transcode Manager delivered upon that need. The positive impressions of the solution from our internal project team were more than matched by the overwhelmingly positive feedback we received externally about the quality of the viewing experience.

Digital Rapids’ expertise proved valuable leading up to the NAB Show itself. They didn’t provide just a product, but truly a solution – advising on best practices, designing the complete workflow to maximize our efficiency, and engaging other project partners to ensure a seamless result.

We are aware that Transcode Manager offers far more features than we took advantage of, from support for dozens of additional formats, to multi-node scalability and failover for fault tolerance. While the 2009 efforts didn’t require these features, we are certainly eager to take advantage of these software benefits in future endeavors.

With online video so prevalent these days, we often take for granted the technology that makes it happen. While almost anyone can now put their video on the web, doing so efficiently and automatically under the demands of on-site event coverage, and at such a high level of quality that even video-savvy viewers are impressed, requires a top-caliber solution from a vendor who truly understands these requirements. Digital Rapids’ Transcode Manager is such a solution.