

Data Tech Ventures Encodes Thousands of VoD Titles with Cisco Transcode Manager

Overview

Data Tech Ventures is a global leader in award-winning broadband video streaming, with a pay-per-view network and more than 100,000 Video on Demand (VoD) titles. As Data Tech's volume of content grew, and the number of formats and resolutions that they needed to support expanded, the company realized that their manual, homegrown, spreadsheet-driven, encoding solution could no longer meet their needs. They set out to find a solution that could help automate that entire encoding process.

In Data Tech's industry, quality counts, so the company needed an encoding solution that could not only scale to meet the huge volume of content coming in every day, but also help ensure that each finished video would meet the quality expectations of the company's discerning viewers.

Cisco Transcode Manager to the Rescue

Cisco created Cisco Transcode Manager to automate the entire file preparation process, eliminating many of the barriers and tedious manual steps that slow down more traditional approaches, such as the one previously used by Data Tech. Cisco Transcode Manager also offers a multiformat, multi-CPU, high-output architecture that can manage an entire workflow, or plug into existing asset management tools.

After trying a few other solutions, the company deployed Cisco Transcode Manager automated workflow management system in January 2009. The company currently uses 18 full Cisco Transcode Manager systems to process an average of 300 full-length features (each running 1.5 to 2 hours) each week, but the volume has been as high as 600 features in one week. Cisco Transcode Manager is also used to encode video compilations that are typically four to six hours in length.

By significantly improving capacity and throughput, Cisco Transcode Manager has helped Data Tech Ventures prepare its high volume of content in less time with fewer machines and less manual intervention than ever before. Data Tech estimates that, as of October 2009, they have used Cisco Transcode Manager for nearly 16,000 encode work orders and 65,000 encode jobs, and have done as many as 3000 individual encodes per week.

Because Data Tech's content comes from a variety of sources in a wide array of formats, Cisco Transcode Manager's ability to ingest all leading formats and output to Windows Media, H.264, MPEG4, Flash, and more was another plus for the company. For example, some content requires 12 different output bitrates in one format, plus seven different bitrates in another format, etc., and Data Tech had to encode each hour of that video to over 18 different bitrates to three to four different formats. That process could be very time-consuming and cumbersome, sometimes requiring multiple solutions for the many different formats. Cisco Transcode Manager's automated workflow and support for multiple formats streamlined this process and eliminated the need for multiple solutions.

Cisco Transcode Manager also centralizes the control of templates, watch folders, and customer IDs, providing oversight for managing submitted content before, during, and after the encode. These features have provided Data Tech with a more robust queuing system, allowing the company to rearrange the order of content in real time. Cisco Transcode Manager has also given the company more flexibility to add sub-workflows and make adjustments with just a few clicks versus rewriting the code.

“The level of automation Cisco Transcode Manager provides makes it so much easier to manage our huge library of content, and gives us even more flexibility in what we encode and how we deliver it,” says Dave Puryear, encoding/codec specialist and production department R&D manager, Data Tech Ventures.

Cisco's industry expertise and level of attention have also impressed Data Tech Ventures. “Their reputation for service was a major selling point, and they have surpassed our expectations,” says Jay Strowd, vice president of Media Technologies, Data Tech Ventures. “The combination of excellent technology and unprecedented support really makes Cisco stand out in our minds. We look forward to working with them even more as they expand the functionality of Cisco Transcode Manager to include more post-processing modules.”

The Bottom Line

“Cisco has changed the way we operate by helping us consolidate all of our products into one solution. We now run everything through Cisco Transcode Manager, instead of piecing together lots of little products, each with its own dedicated machine,” says Strowd.

Data Tech's Cisco Transcode Manager Workflow At A Glance

- 1x Cisco Transcode Manager Server node
- 4x Cisco Transcode Manager Analysis nodes
- 18x Cisco Transcode Manager Encoder nodes
- Uses Cisco Transcode Manager Analysis nodes to easily sort content without manual interaction
- Windows Media, H.264, Flash VP6 encoding
- 100+ templates
- Over 500 hours of source content to be transcoded each week
- 30 Watch Folders
- 15 Work Orders
- Generates weekly all-inclusive status reports
- Generates daily node reports
- Typical roadblocks such as source-file sorting and pre-processing are greatly eased with integration of Cisco Transcode Manager Analysis nodes





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