white paper

What is media logistics for production… and why should I care?

How to save money, time and resources on episodic production, while working with distributed teams

Media logistics concerns the process of management and distribution of media, by providing control of end-to-end asset and metadata management, automated workflow orchestration and operational insights, in order to optimize costs and reduce complexity of operations.

The [Ooyala Flex Media Platform](), now part of Dalet, has led the way in media logistics for over a decade, helping broadcasters, studios and media companies gain visibility and control of their content, optimize the productivity of their media value chain and be more agile in responding to market demand.

We're going to explore how the modular Ooyala Flex Media Platform can give you insights throughout every stage of an asset's production lifecycle — insights that enable you to create efficiency, save costs, eliminate errors, create higher-value content and above all, create revenue.

To illustrate the stages a production goes through in the journey from script to screen and from viewer to dollar, we'll follow an imaginary show through each step of the process. We'll demonstrate how adding the Ooyala Flex Media Platform into the mix changes the way a show is priced and produced, and how the various teams involved in the creation of the show gain new insights every step of the way.

To adapt to recent changes in working practices, several team members work remotely, from their home office and distributed around the world. The Ooyala Flex Media Platform, a fully cloud-native content supply chain, makes it easy for teams to collaborate remotely, and access the tools they need anytime, anywhere, leveraging browser-based user interfaces.

Our fictional show is called *The Flex Factor* or *TFF* for short. It's an eight-episode premium production talent show filmed each week from Monday to Thursday, with contestants across various locations (often based at home), and is on air the following Saturday night, before being syndicated to over 50 licensees worldwide – within 12 hours of initial broadcast. Our scenario begins as the first season is being prepared.

OOYALA® FLEX MEDIA PLATFORM

KEY BENEFITS

- A single source of truth for all production assets (video, images, music, text files and more)

- Control and ownership for custom metadata schemas based on business needs

- Track the entire production and post-production process and add automated checkpoints

- Cloud-based content supply chain

- Support for remote post-production workflow management

- Automation for repetitive tasks, enabling creative users to produce more compelling content

- Workflows are streamlined by maintaining the production and distribution processes within one system

1. Pre-production

Building Efficient Workflows Before a Single Shot is Taken

Traditionally, content creators have had totally different systems to perform all their pre-production processes. This could include anything from creating idea briefs and draft scripts to planning and booking, contractual documents and sales and financial materials. Typically, these are created and tracked, usually in a disconnected manner, using spreadsheets, emails and shared server locations, but without a single point of entry where all teams can collaborate. It can quickly get disjointed, messy to maintain and resource heavy.

OUR PRE-PRODUCTION PROCESS FOR *TFF* IS DIFFERENT.

All our different teams involved in the production of *TFF* (creative, legal, financial and technical) work collaboratively, and mostly remotely, within the Ooyala Flex Media Platform. We've modelled the way we collect and use data to reflect how we want to manage our production and our business. For example, we commission each series of *TFF* independently — so we, within the Platform, created a hierarchy that has the *TFF* production at the top, then each series, then each episode in the series, and finally the different versions of those episodes.

At each level of the hierarchy we have defined the metadata that each team needs to enter or use. So, all the commissioning data is held at the series level. Only those people with the right permissions can view or edit at the appropriate time in our production.

The data we enter into the Ooyala Flex Media Platform in this pre-production stage includes information such as key stakeholders' contact details, production crews, budget notes, scripts, notes about locations, planned shoot dates and more. Importantly, financial and legal information such as the cost of different production elements, funding, co-production details, special terms, and tax relief, can be imported from external systems or entered directly into the Ooyala Flex Media Platform.

The result? Even before a single frame of video is shot, we now have a single source of truth with all of the crucial information about our production assets (video, images, music, text files and more) that we can use throughout our entire production. We save time and create efficiencies at each downstream stage by entering crucial information about our production assets well before they exist.

In addition to providing a collaborative environment for us to enter and share pre-production data, the Ooyala Flex Media Platform allows us to create automated pre-production tasks through workflows, such as issuing emails informing the right individual or teams that they have tasks set.
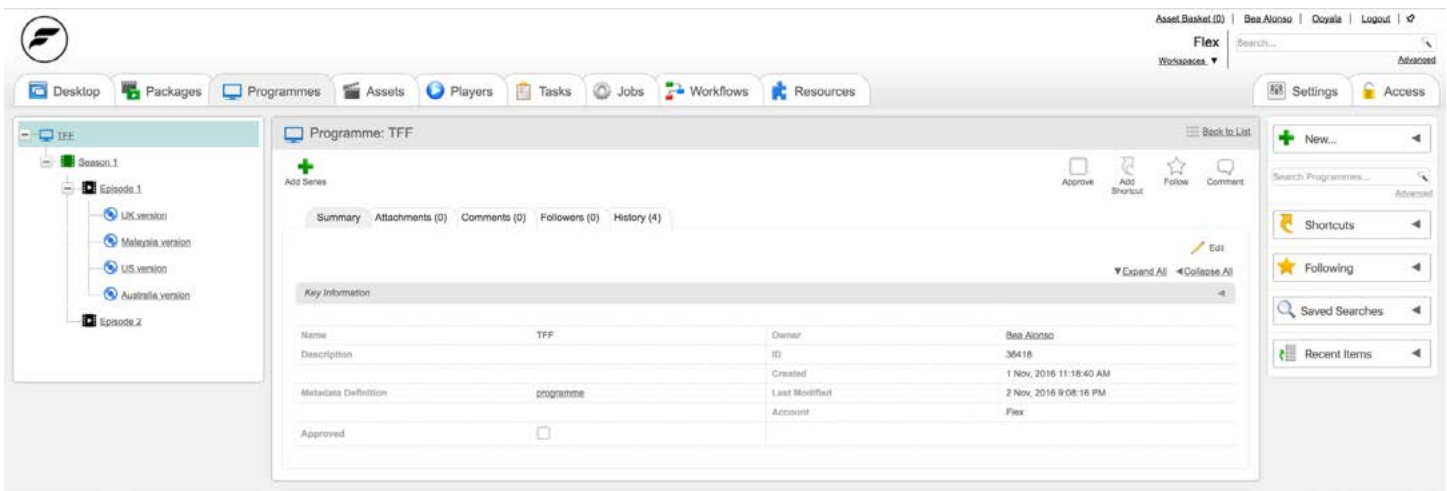
Program hierarchy and pre-production metadata

Control and Ownership

Central to the successful operation of our *TFF* production is our control and ownership of our own metadata schemas based on our often-changing business needs. the Ooyala Flex Media Platform offers us a versatile metadata designer for defining what metadata fields we need now, but also the flexibility to change as our business changes.

For our licensing partners, having accurate information before the show is being produced is critical. Each partner has different windows when the show is "in license" in that territory, with different payment structures, subtitles, keyframing, thumbnails and descriptions based on each region's strengths and the specific multi-platform offering. Importantly, we also add Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for content delivery which have to be adhered to by the production company. And every single one of these crucial pieces of information is collected in a single, collaborative management system… the Ooyala Flex Media Platform.

2. Production

A Well-oiled Machine

Our *TFF* production team has one point of entry for all our show preparation. We use the Ooyala Flex Media Platform to enter essential series or episode information such as the editorial brief, business and production contact names and details, contestant names and numbers, and production and post-production dates. Data is either obtained from external systems that feed into the Ooyala Flex Media Platform, or directly enriched and administered within the system.

At any time throughout the pre-production and commissioning phase, our show producer monitors how different phases of the production are progressing and looks for red flags.

OoyalaTRACK: displaying progress and status of workflow tasks

For *TFF's* worldwide licensees, this also means we can insert all the region-specific syndication data and SLAs into the system before the show is shot and confirm that we have logged their individual regional requests correctly. Taking these steps during the early production stage not only saves us time and effort later, it gives our partners confidence that production can start and that we are giving accurate time estimates.

FULL TRANSPARENCY FROM END TO END

Any automated action performed in the Ooyala Flex Media Platform is recorded as an 'event.' This means we have a thorough audit trail of all the things that happen in our production. We've set up reports on the length of key phases of our production, along with email reports to whoever needs to know. For example, how long did it take to research contestants? What is the cost of contracting voice-over talent? What could we have saved in studio usage? All of these elements can save costs and create efficiencies. In essence, by getting leading indicators of production time and cost, the *TFF* team can change the way they produce even while the production is in progress.

3. Post-production

It's about creativity

As shooting progresses on *The Flex Factor*, all the hours of raw material shot from around the country can be uploaded to cloud storage. the Ooyala Flex Media Platform imports and indexes it all. As video becomes available for editing, the Ooyala Flex Media Platform notifies the post-production team to start work immediately.

When different segments of each episode are ready for review, a message notification (email, SMS, Slack, Microsoft Teams or any other instant messaging platform) is sent to our producer, director and writers, with a link to the relevant segment to review. Even with our producer mostly working from home, she can open the OoyalaREVIEW on her laptop, stream the video content for review, make timecode-based comments, and send feedback immediately to the video editor — also based at home. This saves hours of waiting around for approvals and allows the production process to move swiftly and flexibly towards episode completion.
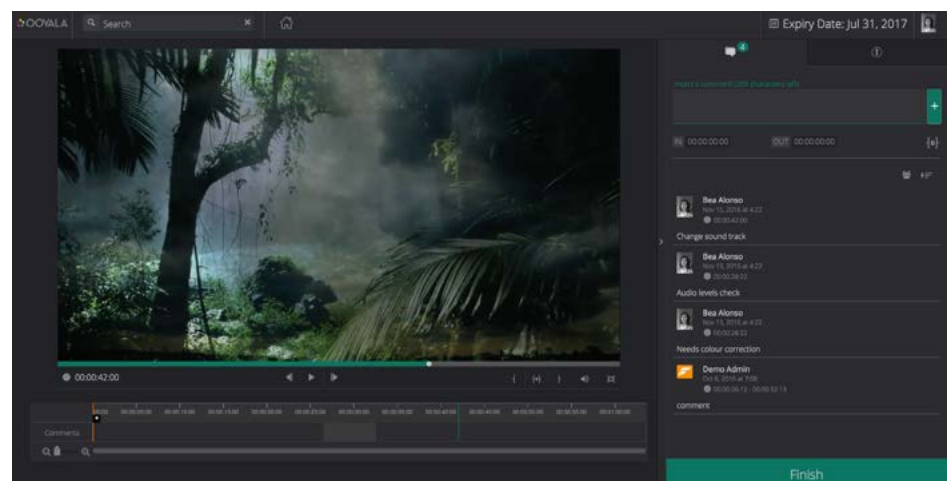
OoyalaREVIEW: producers access and review anytime, anywhere

Ooyala Panels within Adobe Premiere Pro: enables creative teams to collaborate

The Ooyala Flex Media Platform is integrated with both Adobe Premiere Pro and Avid Media Composer. Our editors mostly user Adobe Premiere Pro, and so they use the Adobe Panel extension that allows them to work with all the content managed by the Ooyala Flex Media Platform, inside their creative tools. They can search for assets, bring them to their edit bin, edit as usual, and finish their work by triggering specific workflows such as email notifications to the producer, or push a promo to social media...all within the comfort of Adobe Premiere Pro, and their home!

Once this week's episode of *TFF* is edited and approved by our executive producer, the work on regional versioning begins.

Before we had the Ooyala Flex Media Platform, this started with our craft editors performing cut-out work, removing audience voting sections (so that each episode can be universally distributed), adding subtitles, removing sensitive content for certain geographies, and so on. This process was creating a bottleneck and good craft editors don't come cheap. Several hours were spent in re-versioning each episode ready for distribution — it was an expensive process that limited our productivity.

Subtitles can be created efficiently leveraging AI from Dalet Media Cortex, which indexes hours and hours of speech into text, including the ability to translate into multiple languages and manually adjust where needed. From here, subtitle files can be created — this is often saving us up to 80% of time spent subtitling!

Of course, this work is still required, and still needs humans to make certain decisions and add creativity to the process, but now with the Ooyala Flex Media Platform we have streamlined the workflow. Less experienced members of our team can produce the first pass at an edit using OoyalaMAM, an intuitive tool that allows them to create rough cuts and add timecoded comments. This enables them to create an edit decision list (EDL) marking in/out points where sections need to be removed, replaced or added. They can then trigger one of several workflows that we have configured to perform different actions.

Where a simple edit is acceptable, a 'conform' workflow is triggered. In this workflow a new file is created from the EDL we'd produced earlier, using Dalet AmberFin (or other transcoder) to lift out or replace the relevant sections from each episode, then consolidate and QC the video into a new transmission master ready for delivery to different territories.

Alternatively, where more detailed or creative editing is required, a workflow is triggered to deliver the EDL to a craft editor to finish.
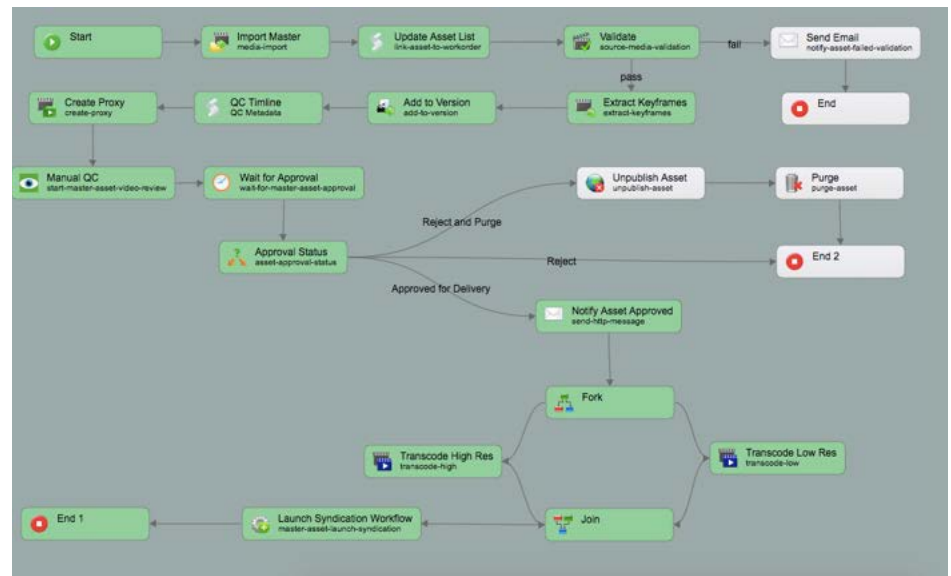
A typical post-production workflow at *TFF* — waiting for approval

4. Syndication and Distribution

Once our *TFF* production episodes have been regionalized, we syndicate them to our licensees. For this we've configured the Ooyala Flex Media Platform with several syndication and distribution workflows based on each partner's requirements. Remember how all the region-specific syndication data and SLAs were entered in the system during the pre-production process? This is where that comes in handy, since the Ooyala Flex Media Platform can package up each TX Master according to the specific needs of each syndication partner: what file resolutions or definitions they need, subtitles, thumbnails, what exact metadata each has signed up to receive in what format, licensing information and more, and it's all fully configurable. What used to take multiple teams and many hours to put together is now delivered within minutes.

OoyalaMAM: allows marking of sections to be automatically removed before distribution

In addition to syndicating content to our licensees, we also publish some *TFF* content to our Facebook, Twitter and YouTube channels, as well as our VOD channel. Again, the processes needed to prepare and send media and associated metadata to these platforms is configured and automated by the Ooyala Flex Media Platform based on our weekly needs. Our production team sometimes manually trigger a publish workflow for selected clips to a specified social media platform, but some content is also published automatically in accordance with configurable business rules. And they can do this anytime of the day, during their home-working schedule!

5. The Devil is in the Data

The Ooyala Flex Media Platform logs every single activity throughout all the above production processes, whether automated actions or user tasks. Powerful event searching tools allow us to search for specific events.

By maintaining the production and distribution workflows within one system, we use the data collected at each point to form real insights, which in turn inform adjustments and improvements in our overall media business process. For example, data collected from episode one clearly shows that some of the renditions for worldwide licensees were duplicated using unnecessary transcoding and storage time. Our technical team therefore reconfigured the workflows to merge these renditions together, immediately saving time and money.

As each episode is produced, patterns emerge, and our *TFF* production and technical teams examine data across various time ranges (within the past week, month, whole series) and locate areas that they then improve for a more efficient production process.
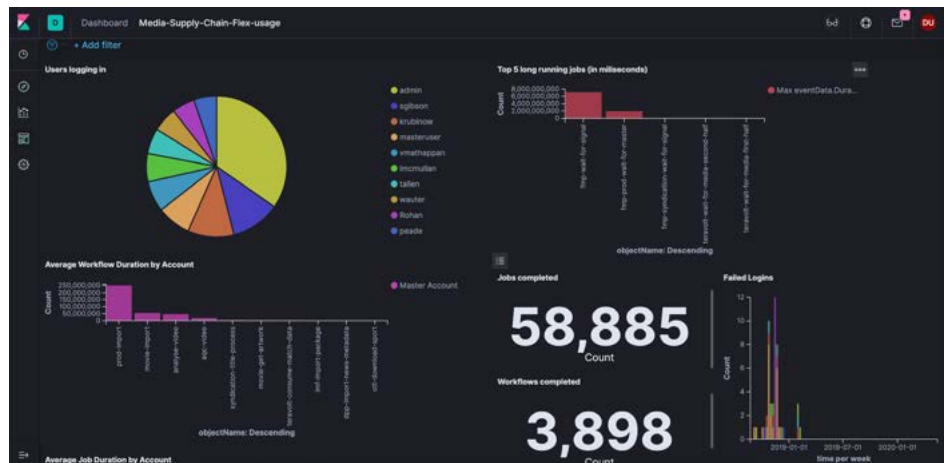
Analytics dashboards can be created with the Ooyala Flex Media Platform to display trends across any area of the production process

Important to note here is the issue of security, a growing concern in this new world of distribution over IP. The Ooyala Flex Media Platform has a number of functions built for this sensitive issue. For our *TFF* production we have set up very granular user permissions, and every single action within the system is logged; so it's easy to track down who exported, published or downloaded your content. It also allows automatic watermarking of assets whenever they are published for external use, meaning your content remains attributable to you, wherever it goes.

6. Maximizing ROI with the Ooyala Flex Media Platform

The Ooyala Flex Media Platform enabled our imaginary *TFF* production to integrate all the silos of operation that we had in our production onto one platform, from commissioning to syndication. It brought all our data together into one source of truth, and delivered the visibility and control of our media that we needed to run an efficient and responsive production. Since the Platform is fully cloud based, our team can be distributed across several locations and work remotely from home or, when needed, from location.

With the Platform, we automated all those actions that don't need humans to make decisions or don't need humans to be creative. We achieved this using the highly composable automated workflows of the Ooyala Flex Media Platform along with our precious operational data — applying business rules that we've defined (and continue to evolve) to make decisions and trigger actions based on the data collected throughout the production stages. Even where humans were needed, we configured the Ooyala Flex Media Platform to provide our operators with all the information and content that they needed to perform their tasks more efficiently. The result? Reduced human error, reduced duplication of tasks, increased productivity, increased user satisfaction... the list goes on.

And as every automated action and human task performed in the Ooyala Flex Media Platform creates an 'event' that is stored forever, we formed a powerful audit trail to analyze. With this data we can identify, quantify and address bottlenecks in our operation — sometimes through additional staff training and sometimes through workflow changes. In fact, the speed and ease at which we can change our workflows based on our data has given us unprecedented agility, so we can rapidly adjust our operation to meet the changing needs of our *TFF* production.

All this has enabled us to make *TFF* a highly profitable production — simultaneously reducing our operational expenses, reducing the capital tied up in our work-in-progress media inventory, and increasing the sales of our *TFF* production content with more relevant material that is turned around more quickly than our competitors' productions. We now modify our product so that it purposely engages a larger audience and collects more revenue as a result. Nothing is left to chance: our team works collaboratively and effectively towards the same goal.

That is how the Ooyala Flex Media Platform has changed the way we produce, distribute and learn from our most precious asset: our content.

Interested in streamlining your media logistics? Learn more about the Ooyala Flex Media Platform and contact us to discuss your project!

Streamlined Media Logistics

We have used an imaginary example of a talent show here to illustrate how the Ooyala Flex Media Platform can introduce efficiencies and increase your revenue in production and post-production workflows, but don't just take our word for it. Here are some examples of real benefits brought to our customers.

85%
reduction in delivery times

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A large multi-national post-production house, with offices in the UK and New York, not too dissimilar to the one that would create *The Flex Factor*, has seen a reduction in post-production project delivery times by 85% after deploying the Ooyala Flex Media Platform. This has been realized by automating workflows and eliminating human errors and redundancy.

5 min
highlights post-produced, packaged and delivered

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A well-known international broadcaster is now able to offer event highlights to its 40 worldwide syndication partners in under 5 minutes. Live event highlights are post-produced, packaged, transcoded and delivered (in more than 30 different renditions) within minutes of the highlight taking place, thanks to the Ooyala Flex Media Platform's ability to automate these syndication steps.
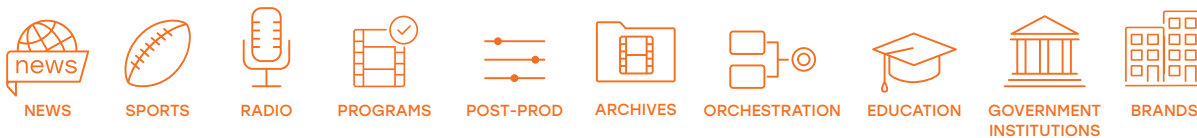
71%
cost reduction

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A global content producer and distributor, with geographically distributed teams, saw a reduction in time of 58% when it came to preparing content for international syndication, after implementing the Ooyala Flex Media Platform, including a direct cost reduction of 71%. They also were able to onboard new projects and syndication partners in half the time it took previously.

About Dalet

Dalet solutions and services enable media organisations to create, manage and distribute content faster and more efficiently, fully maximising the value of assets. Based on an agile foundation, Dalet offers rich collaborative tools empowering end-to-end workflows for news, sports, program preparation, post-production, archives, radio, education, governments and institutions. Dalet platforms are scalable and modular. They offer targeted applications with key capabilities to address critical functions of small to large media operations — such as planning, workflow orchestration, ingest, cataloguing, editing, chat and notifications, transcoding, play out automation, multi-platform distribution and analytics.

Dalet Solutions

NEWS SPORTS RADIO PROGRAMS POST-PROD ARCHIVES ORCHESTRATION EDUCATION GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS BRANDS

Dalet Technologies

DALET Galaxy five   OOYALA FLEX MEDIA PLATFORM

DALET AmberFin   DALET Brio   DALET Cube   DALET OnePlay   DALET Media Cortex   DALET StoreFront

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