

PERSPECTIVE

Any Content, Anytime, Anywhere, Any Device

Four aces in a winning strategy for media and entertainment enterprises



- Edward Altman, Sathish Kasthuri, Harry Jose

Abstract

Creative content and business process outsourcing (BPO) may seem like an odd couple — probably more so than Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau from the 1968 movie of the same name. But Lemmon and Matthau overcame the odds by complementing each other's strengths. Today, creative content and business process outsourcing can do the same, meet customer expectations head-on and enhance content monetization in the process.

Today's digitally savvy customers expect no less than 'Any Content, Anytime, Anywhere, on Any Device' – what we refer to as 4A. Adopting cloud computing is only the beginning of 4A — because technology alone doesn't guarantee success in monetizing content, meeting customer expectations does. Meeting these expectations will require a holistic strategy that blends cloud implementation with insights from social media and advances in content search. This is where media and entertainment (M&E) enterprises should leverage a BPO partner with strong technology capabilities in order to create an intuitive and relevant content delivery framework that unlocks the monetization potential of 4A. It will give customers the content experience they have come to expect. In essence, like Vito Corleone would say, "Make them an offer they can't refuse."

The New Tipping Point

Customer expectations, not technology

“ (Today) I can show my granddaughter a Mickey Mouse short (movie) that was made in 1931 on my daughter’s iPad. ”

– Robert (Bob) Iger, President and CEO, The Walt Disney Company; ‘All Things Digital’ – D9 interview with Kara Swisher, June 30, 2011.

During the same interview, Alison Sheridan, a customer in the audience, told Bob Iger, “I bought an iPad, I bought the adapter to go to my projector, I bought the movie Up! (2009), and because of highdefinition copy protection, I can’t play it on my projector.”

Both Alison Sheridan and Bob Iger’s granddaughter underscore a big shift in content consumption—that while technology has made it possible to

consume content in newer ways, it is actually the expectations of the customer that is the real business driver. And M&E enterprises are aware of this shift. Today, their customer base spans different generations with different levels of digital maturity—even the seven-year old sitting in the backseat of her father’s car, watching her favorite channel on the family’s iPad.

For the better part of the previous decade, the focus of the M&E industry was on

technology. Topics like digitization, developing better encoding techniques for faster streaming, enabling HD / 3D content, and digital rights management were ‘top of mind’ for top management. Not anymore—M&E enterprises are realizing that the customer is at the center, and that her/his demands and expectations are driving or will drive technology innovations, and not the other way round

What customers want

Imagine you could read the thoughts of media customers, a power similar to Mel Gibson’s character in ‘What Women Want.’ These are probably some of the thoughts you would hear.

“I have to store content in so many places (both physical and virtual) – book shelves, CD racks, portable devices, cloud...”

“The content experience is so different on different devices – the way I read, hear, and see. And let’s not even get started on digital rights management.”



“I want to access so many types of content – books, news, movies, sports events, cable, music...”

“As long as I legally own the content that I have, why shouldn’t I be able to consume any of my content, anywhere I am, any time that I feel like, on any device that I own? Why shouldn’t this be a fundamental right to view content that I have bought?”

The big shift:

Ubiquitous content consumption becomes a fundamental right

A peek inside the customer’s mind reveals that ease of use and ease of access are top priorities – irrespective of device, platform, and type of content.

Four aces in one hand

The challenges and opportunities

Anytime, anywhere, any device – or 3A – is not a radically new concept. People have been talking about it for a while now, and quite a few firms have tried to implement it as well. The Wall Street Journal is one firm that actively uses this concept in its advertisements. However moving from 3A to 4A, i.e. adding the fourth ace of ‘any content’ is a complete paradigm shift. 3A became a reality because of the ubiquitous nature of the Internet. But, the hurdle was and still is in viewing and getting access to the ‘not for free’ video content, which is not that easy because of the complexities in digital rights management. Today, it is not uncommon for different firms to own the rights for parts of the same content. Examples include:

- Different firms owning the rights to the same content in different geographies
- Different firms owning the rights to the same content in different mediums such as movies, books and merchandise
- Different firms owning rights to different sequels / derivatives of the same original work

With a diverse ecosystem of content creators, distributors and consumers, implementing each A in the 4A strategy comes with its own set of unique challenges

- **Anytime:** Implementing ‘any time’ is more of a technology challenge as media and entertainment companies try to improve their content delivery methodology in a manner where they can make use of existing customer bandwidth to deliver a satisfactory customer experience
- **Anywhere:** The challenges in implementing ‘anywhere’ are similar to ‘anytime,’ with rights management, regulatory compliance and content format issues thrown in for good measure
- **Any device:** Enterprises find it difficult to cater to multiple content formats that suit the customer’s device of choice.
- **Any content:** The biggest challenge is the ability to convert any content the customer has legally purchased into a format that is compatible across



devices. Since the device of choice for content consumption is most likely to be a digital one, the content also will need to be in the digital format. The device has to be equipped to showcase the content. Since most of the content is subsidized through advertising, continuing to serve brands without compromising on customer experience is another critical aspect

Implementing 4A

A media and entertainment company — including the M&E ecosystem, which consists primarily of distribution entities (such as iTunes, Netflix and Hulu – let alone the Broadcast Networks and Cable Companies) — may not choose to implement all the four As at the same time. The other thing to be

borne in mind is that the move towards 4A is driven by customers — by their demand that consumption of any legally purchased content on any device, anytime, anywhere, be made a fundamental right. Since digitized content is what travels across devices, it stands to reason that the customer push towards 4A will be

dependent on how comfortable they are in the digital world. Teens watching their favorite program on their tablet will be much more comfortable digitally (than their 70-year old grandfathers trying to navigate a Facebook page) and are more likely to subscribe to innovative 4A offerings from M&E enterprises.

Integrating cloud usage with social media analytics and instant search gratification

Connecting the dots, the cloud will play a major role in the implementation of 4A. All the industry efforts in this direction will leverage the advantages that the cloud offers. A few examples of industry initiatives include:

- Digital lockers for customers (such as UltraViolet and KeyChest)
- Compatibility with any device through a universal format or storage of multiple formats
- Storage and delivery CDN (content delivery networks)

- Access and rights management on the cloud
- Content licensing and IP management seamlessly across geographies

We began this point of view by stating that the customer is setting the pace for innovation in media and entertainment, and that 4A is the direction in which we see the industry moving to. The digital maturity of the customer will also determine the ease and acceptance of offerings in the 4A space. However, it will not be all smooth sailing on the quest for 4A. Hurdles will

need to be crossed. The customer will now have access to all the content they can ever wish to consume. This is a good problem to have, since finding the solution to this problem will keep increasing content consumption.

It is here that two corollary trends, which have come about because of increased digital maturity of customers, appear with potential implications for content providers. One is the rise of social media, and the second is the need for instant search gratification.

Trend 1 – The connected customer

Today's 'connected' customers revel in the ability to have social conversations that are not affected by the vagaries of time and distance. On forums such as Twitter, they share what's on their mind at any given moment – including the content they are consuming / wish to consume – instantaneously. Access to these conversations will enable content owners (creators) to peek into the minds of their customers.

To capitalize on social conversations, we recommend a 'social media command center' that interprets social data to capture the voice of the customer. Using insights from the command center, enterprises can create products and tailor solutions that enable ease of content access across platforms.



Trend 2 – Instant search gratification

As customers move through the stages of 4A awareness to 4A addiction, they will increasingly seek instant gratification in content search. In their quest for this gratification, customers may complain of a poor digital experience and lose interest – adversely impacting content monetization.

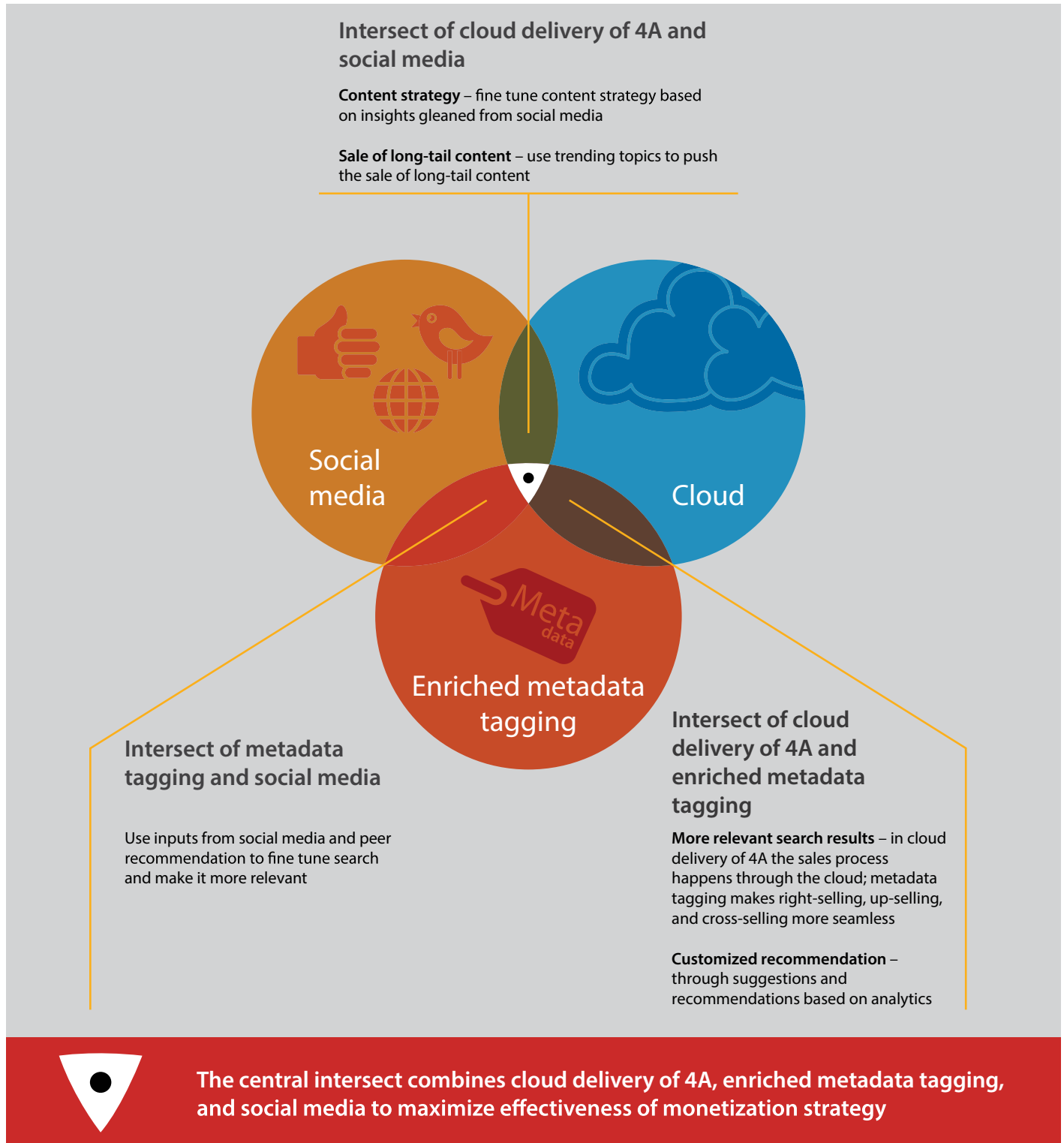
We recommend that content distributors make their content more discoverable across the digital web through enriched tagging and recommendations, which are the first steps in the holy grail of instant search gratification.



The winning hand

Putting it all together in the 4A world

The ability to leverage the intersection of cloud delivery, social media analytics, and advanced metadata tagging will enable M&E enterprises to unlock their complete content monetization potential. To further this goal, Infosys BPO has created a '4A intersection framework.' This unique framework enables M&E enterprises to mine the digital web for insights and push the right content to the right customer.



The way forward

The digital revolution is here to stay, and studios and networks must adapt to the change. Just like what happened when VHS and cable revolutionized the movie industry, and when compact discs and portable music players revolutionized the music industry. The 4As – any content, anytime, anywhere, any device – is today's revolution. One that will transform the industry towards a customer-centric, omnicontent future. It is no longer just about managing processes to make content omnipresent across channels. M&E enterprises must now look to their BPO partners to operationalize the 4As successfully — so the right content reaches the right customer, at the right time, at the right place, and on the right device. And not just any BPO provider will do — only a BPO partner that has a vision for the digital media future and is invested in it for the long term can support studios and networks in this journey. Such a partnership will be imperative to achieving the winning hand.



About the Author



Edward Altman

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Edward is on the cutting edge of developing and implementing a wide suite of BPO / media services for Hollywood studios as well as cable and broadcast networks.

His career spans 30 years in information technology, of which more than 15 years were in the entertainment and consulting industries, including stints at Twentieth Century Fox, Paramount Pictures, and MGM – where he served as the chief information officer.

He received his BS and MS degrees in mathematics / computer science from the University of Michigan.



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Sathish has experience in various media and entertainment industry segments such as online, broadcast and publishing. For the past 16 years, he has worked in multiple areas and has well-rounded experience in business process management, especially in content management.

He is a member of the core team of the Infosys BPO media and entertainment practice, with focus on go-to-market strategy and development of alliances.



Harry Jose

Head of Marketing, Infosys BPO

Harry currently heads marketing for Infosys BPO. Prior to this, he was heading the ECS Centre of Excellence, in which capacity he was responsible for all thought leadership and domain competency enhancement initiatives across energy, communications, media & entertainment and services practices of Infosys BPO. Harry was a member of the core team of media & entertainment practice of Infosys BPO and focused on external messaging. He has over 11 years of industry experience across multiple domains. Harry holds an MBA from Nirma Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.

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