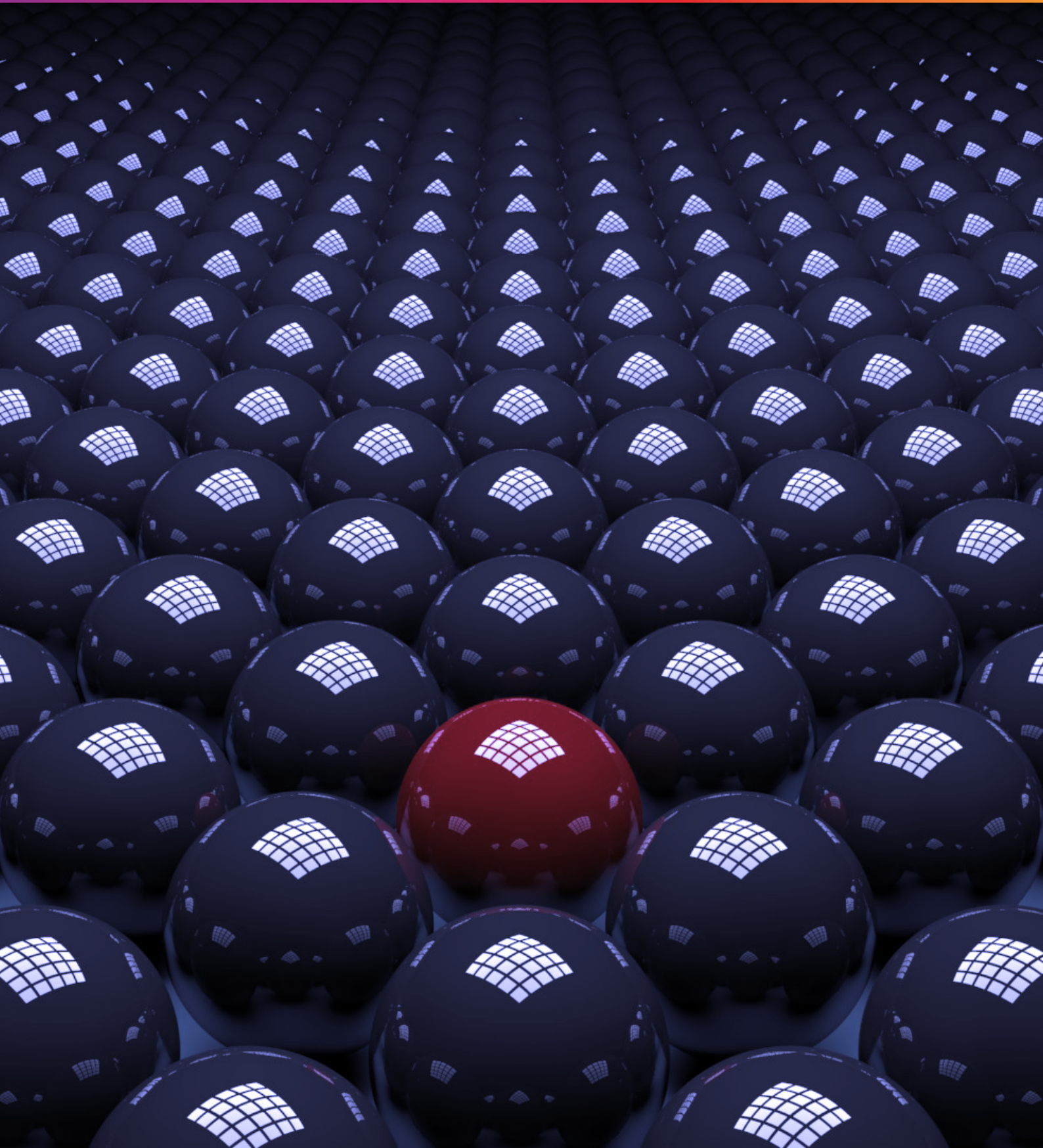# Understanding the Myriad of Online Video Platforms

Overview

No doubt you're reading this because you've discovered the plethora of solutions for managing content. Offline, online, store, manage, collaborate, distribute, system, application, platform, enterprise grade, consumer – the categories and capabilities are vast.

Whether you are looking for an update or to narrow your options, this short paper will explain some of the terminology you'll come across and help make sense of the landscape. What this document doesn't do is put vendors into categories, provide opinion, rankings or recommendations. We'll leave that to the analysts.

Let's start with some of the terminology you'll come across.

Terminology

With technology advancing at fast pace, the boundaries between each category have become blurred. While one vendor may prefer the term asset management another may promote their solution as a collaboration platform. To add to the confusion, nearly all these categories have been abbreviated.

Common terms for managing video content include:

• **OVP or OVMP** (Online Video Platform or Online Video Management Platform) video asset management or streaming.

• **EVP** (Enterprise Video Platform) designed specifically for larger businesses to manage vast quantities of video assets.

• **CMS or OVCMS** (Content Management System or Online Video Content Management System) used to manage business content or dynamic text for your website. CMS may have been adapted to handle video where OVCMS will have been designed specifically.

• **VCP** (Video Collaboration Platform) designed for teams to store, manipulate and work together on video assets.

• **CDN** (Content Delivery Network) also known as video hosting. A video player solution that enables hosting, embedding, delivery and streaming of videos from your website.

• **DAM** (Digital Asset Management) is a system that manages tasks and workflow of digital assets.

• **MAM** (Media Asset Management) is a specialized DAM that focuses purely on video, animation and audio content.

• **PAM** (Production Asset Management) is a system that focuses on managing asset during creation and production of feature films, animation, video games and TV content.

You may come across other types of solution that use the terminology 'collaboration platform' but do not necessarily manage video assets, including:

• Broadcasting or multicasting
• Content aggregation
• Messaging platforms
• Web conferencing and meetings (sometimes referred to as collaboration)

Understanding the Requirements

First of all, think beyond the content you work with today and anticipate the types of content you are likely to be working with in future. Most solutions handle traditional text and office files, some specialize in graphics and audio. Some have addressed the more complex challenge of managing high-resolution video and multiple formats (codecs). Since most organizations are working with and scaling their use of video, this paper focusses exclusively on video solutions.

Consider what you need to do with your content, priorities and challenges that you have with video management. Again, remember to anticipate your future requirements. There may be some terms you are not familiar with so we've added notes to some of the points.

- Uploading (ingesting) and downloading
- Transcoding and converting different file formats
- Logging, transcription or annotation
- Searching or finding assets
- Editing
- Accessibility and sharing of content
- Collaborating with colleagues, customers or partners
- Review and approval
- Content storage and asset management
- Security of content, business continuity and disaster recovery
- Content syndication, delivery and distribution
- Streaming or playout
- Monetization or e-commerce
- Digital rights management
- Metrics, usage and engagement analytics
- Account administration and permissions

Some of these terms may be potentially new to you, so here's a quick definition:

Uploading and downloading - centers around ensuring efficient transfer of content via optimized transfer of original video assets. Getting video content in and out of the online video platform is usually UDP, FTP or TCP optimized for variable network characteristics.

Transcoding - is the process of converting original video files using different codecs (compression techniques) that enable the resultant video to be played with a variety of browsers under variable network conditions. Transcoding is mainly used to create a proxy version of the video for lightweight or thin client viewing.
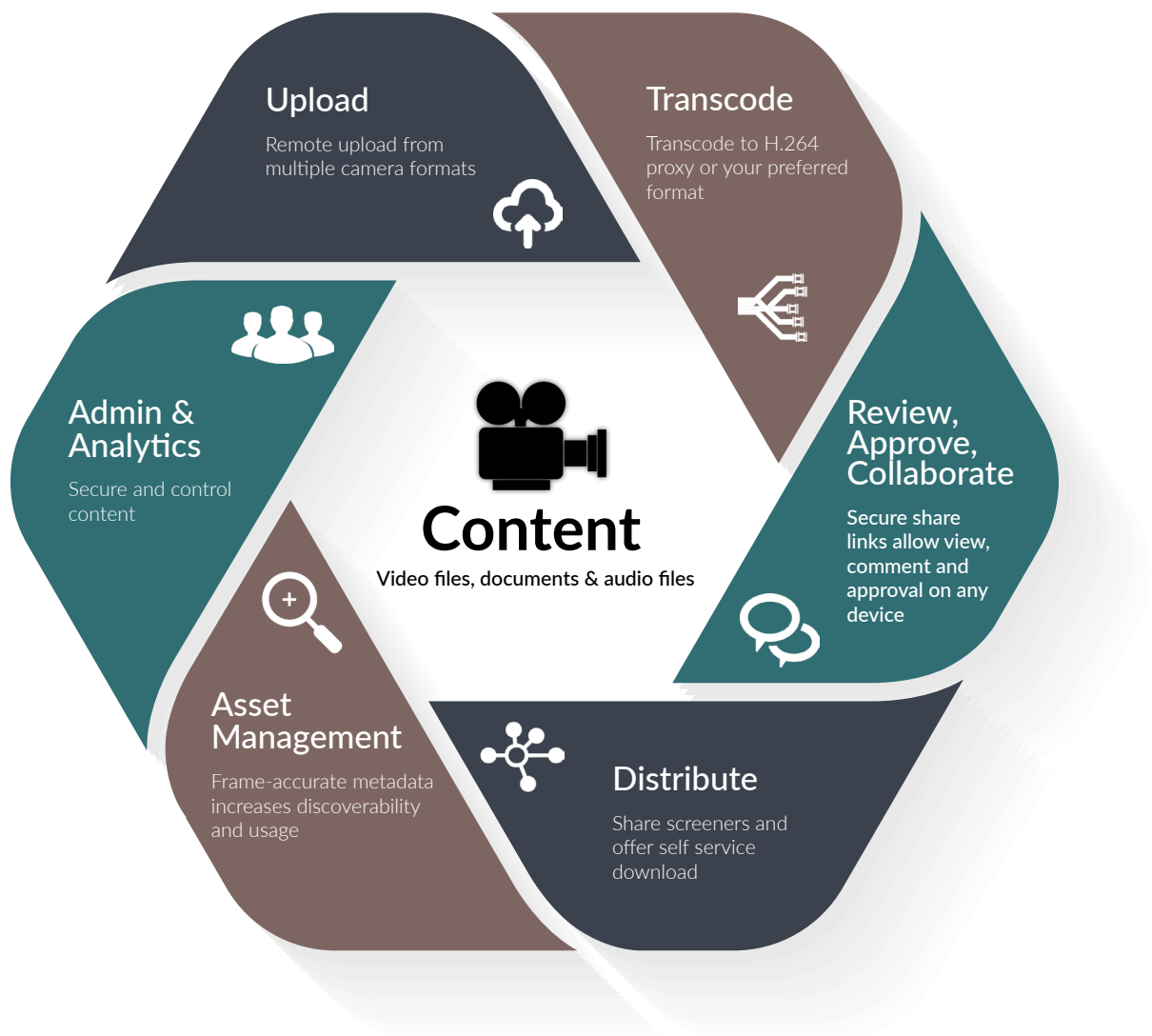
Volume or size of video files - concerns the measurement of current storage utilization of video files compared to predicted volume consumption. It is the primary cost consideration when working with video content. Private or public cloud elastic storage infrastructure that is independently managed is a key characteristic of an online video platform, supporting both dynamic volume or variable file sizes.

Business continuity or disaster recovery - is fundamentally about sustaining the business when working with video assets. If BC and DR is a priority, then you should look for solutions that offer embedded and transparent redundancy that is aligned to your current infrastructure.

With centralized infrastructure, there is a direct benefit to reusing assets and high-quality playback that is tailored to Internet or network characteristics. Also, in the case of disaster recovery, assets can easily be restored onsite via the centralized platform and users can either have remote DR or combination of onsite and offsite DR.

Digital rights management - is a systematic way of defining who and when they can consume video content, especially when securing or monetizing high-value assets.

The following diagram summarizes how all the elements interact with each other within the cloud:

Upload
Remote upload from multiple camera formats

Transcode
Transcode to H.264 proxy or your preferred format

Admin & Analytics
Secure and control content

Content
Video files, documents & audio files

Review, Approve, Collaborate
Secure share links allow view, comment and approval on any device

Asset Management
Frame-accurate metadata increases discoverability and usage

Distribute
Share screeners and offer self service download

By drawing your workflow diagram from content creation to distribution you'll be able to see which tasks can be fulfilled by existing systems and highlight the gaps. If you are willing to consider new and different ways of working during this exercise, you may be able to consolidate your workflows and improve efficiency and productivity. A handy guide to **understanding your requirements** provides more in-depth information in this area.

Categorizing Vendors

It can be tempting to gravitate towards brands that you are familiar with but that doesn't necessarily mean they offer the best solution to your requirements or are the safest bet. Furthermore, some brands have successfully transitioned across industries or from consumer to enterprise and vice versa and should not be prematurely categorized based on their heritage.

There are market developments and new offerings being released all the time so it pays to keep your options open and review vendors on a regular basis.

1. Asset Management or Playout?

Are you looking to manage video during its lifecycle or playout/stream to audiences? If the former, you'll be looking for an asset management and collaboration solution. If the latter, a delivery solution. Most market offerings don't span both categories and you may find two solutions that work well together.

2. Depth of Access Needed?

If you are looking at asset/content management solutions, you'll need to decide the extent that you want to manipulate and collaborate on files. Some solutions just offer storage and tag based searching, others are more feature-rich and allow users to view and work with files simultaneously.

3. Consumer or Enterprise?

How much video do you handle on a regular basis and how fast are you scaling?

The volume of video content you are dealing with will help you understand if a consumer-based tool will suffice or whether you need a more robust and feature-rich enterprise-grade system.

Consumer tools are designed for those starting out or more experienced users who require simple functionality. New features are added regularly. Be wary of using tools designed for consumers in an enterprise environment as they won't be so robust.

Enterprise tools are for those regularly producing large quantities of video. Online video platforms that are designed for enterprise and corporate applications usually have a heritage in broadcast, offer higher content security, broader capability and features designed for professionals such as media asset management, transcoding, editing and digital rights managed distribution.

This supplementary whitepaper summarizes the **current state of consumer video tool use** with respect to marketing, communications and training within large corporations.

4. App, Application or Platform?

Apps are smaller than applications and are usually specific to individual tasks or used as part of or integrated with other apps to provide a complete solution. Apps can be part of the operating system or more specifically portable devices, e.g. smart phones and tablets. An Application is "standalone" desktop software normally utilized on PCs or workstations. Platforms have embedded applications or apps that are supported by platform specific IT infrastructure. The decision on whether to select a lightweight app or more robust solution similarly equates to what volumes of content you are working with, the security and capability you are looking for and the range of professional features.

5. Cloud or On Premise?

If you're reading this, you've probably already decided a cloud solution is right for you, but while evaluating you may come across on premise or hybrid solutions. A separate guide to **understanding the cloud** outlines the various advantages and disadvantages of these solutions.

6. Public vs. Private Cloud

Public cloud infrastructure is owned and operated by a third party such as Amazon Web Services, Rackspace, and Microsoft Azure. With public cloud, there is no dissemination between different types of users.

Private cloud is an environment in which the hardware, storage and network are set up, maintained and dedicated to one company or client. It affords more security and control than public cloud, meaning greater influence of how it is deployed and secured. Private cloud vendors provide a single tier of SLA where there is no accountability to any 3rd party.

Some vendors own and manage their own infrastructure dedicated to their client base. This offers the cost benefits of public cloud and the security and control of private cloud.

7. Looking Beyond the Messaging and Comparison Tables

Once you've narrowed the categories, you'll want to shortlist potential vendors. Company websites are a good first point of research. Check whether the messaging and offering is broadly in line with your vision and requirements.

A feature by feature comparison may seem the next, most obvious step but in reality, it's very difficult to compare like for like. One could argue that feature comparisons are a futile exercise considering most vendors release product enhancements all the time. Don't be put off by large variances in pricing either – this usually indicates differences in capability.

Where possible, take a longer term view and look for investment in R&D and infrastructure, the roadmap, customer support and strategic vision. By selecting a company and their offering rather than a product, you'll have a partner that supports and enhances your business strategy.

8. Current Base

It's often hard to work out from generally available content, what penetration or success a vendor has in the market. A few moments **reviewing the customer list and reading case studies** will give you practical insight into use cases where the vendor excels.

Where does Aframe fit?

Aframe's cloud platform helps organizations manage large volumes of multi-format video by reducing complexity and making it easy for colleagues, clients and partners to find, access and collaborate on video assets. Aframe meets the most demanding standards and is trusted by the world's leading broadcast, enterprise and new media organizations.

Aframe saves cost, increases usage of assets and helps organizations achieve a higher return on their content investment. Some use cases are listed below:

Central Video Platform

Aframe is a cloud collaboration platform that provides one central location for global teams and international partners to access and manage high-resolution video. It offers customers the ability to upload, transcode, view assets in a video player, add metadata and transcription, dynamically search, review and approve, and analyze usage.

Media Management & Collaboration

Aframe's central platform helps marketing, promos and reversioning groups take control of their assets and manage them more effectively. With less time spent wrestling with technical issues, teams can be more productive and make more use of assets.

Asset Monetization

Commercial teams can create online catalogs, sales kits and screeners to improve professionalism and customer service. The central cloud platform overcomes the commercial and technical challenges of securely managing and distributing assets to improve partner communications, streamline the sales process, broaden sales reach and ultimately increase revenue.

Production

Aframe reduces the complexity of managing media across all types of production. Cloud-powered workflows means everyone, wherever they are based, has instant access to the content they need from one central place. By reducing the barriers of production, teams can focus on creating the highest quality content and complete productions in record time.

We hope the guide has helped you understand and narrow down the available solutions that may be right for your business. If Aframe is a potential solution, you can book a call with a workflow consultant who would be happy to show you Aframe in action.

Request a personalized demo for your team
aframe.com/demo