Perspectives on Playout:

What's working in the real world?

Snapshots of Global Innovation
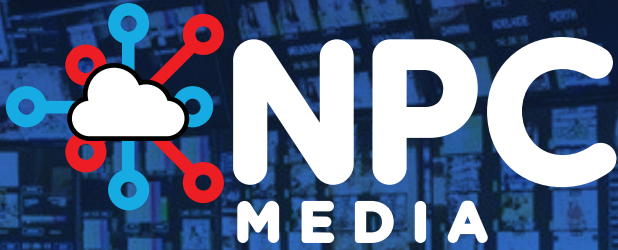
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The days of a single over-the-air channel are long behind us. Media companies are under constant pressure to spin up new channels for multiple platforms — and fast-track time to revenue.

Future-focused media companies around the world are tackling these challenges by rethinking and reshaping the way they manage playout.

And many of them are doing it with Imagine.

Use case: IP-based managed media services

NPC Media is a collaborative, commercial venture between Australia's two largest commercial broadcasters, Nine Network and Seven Network.

When Nine originally established the National Playout Centre (NPC) in Sydney, the facility served 18 regional channels. The collaboration between Nine and Seven kicked off a phased upgrade of the NPC, with the goal of transforming the single-station facility into an IP-based, multi-tenanted managed media services provider.

To support this massive undertaking, NPC Media implemented an end-to-end broadcast playout chain — from a common ingest platform through to software-based channel origination — based on the Versio™ modular playout product suite.

Today, the NPC supports more than 211 live terrestrial television channels, together with a further 392 pass-through multiplexed channels.

NPC Media is using Versio to:

Consolidate multiple broadcast operations into a state-of-the-art playout center with shared facilities

Manage current baseband infrastructure and economically transition to IP-based media services

Deliver operational efficiencies not previously achievable using traditional technology platforms

Implement new services to help reduce costs and deliver new offerings to market more quickly

Enable clients to streamline processes, promote collaboration, and increase productivity

> "We needed to add playout channels as quickly as possible. Imagine could provide a solution quickly, fitting precisely into our workflow, and ensuring the reliability and security we required."

Benedict V Galang
First Vice President Network Engineering & Operation

Use case: Fast, seamless channel expansion

Cignal TV is the Philippines' premier direct-to-home (DTH) satellite provider. Launched in 2009, the company broadcasts premium TV content over 121 SD and HD channels to household and commercial venues nationwide.

To meet audience expectations, Cignal TV continually adds high-quality content and channels. But standing up new channels can be a disruptive process for media organizations — and any downtime means lost revenues.

By deploying the software-based Versio™ modular playout solution and Versio™ IOX SAN high-performance online storage, Cignal TV was able to seamlessly add playout capacity and resilience, prepare for quick and easy future channel expansion, and take a first step toward IP connectivity.

Today, Cignal is the most subscribed Pay-TV provider in the Philippines!

Cignal TV is using Versio to:

Increase scalability and speed to market via a future-proofed, software-based solution

Deploy an efficient, geo-dispersed 4+1 system with redundancy on each channel

Stand up channels with minimal disruption by seamlessly slotting additional capacity into existing operations

Create a highly automated, multichannel MCR that is easy to operate, monitor, and maintain

Take a first step toward future IP connectivity

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4

Use case: Virtualized unified playout & scheduling

viàGroupe (formerly Médias du Sud) is an independent multimedia group based in the south of France. As part of a forward-looking initiative begun in 2018, viàGroupe created viàRéseau — the first national grouping of local TV stations in France.

The goal of the first phase was to deliver local content to 20 stations from a central data center. To support the pioneering venture, viàGroupe married its own in-house technology with Imagine's Versio™ modular playout to implement a fully virtualized, IP-based unified playout and scheduling solution.

Versio integrates via a REST API with viàGroupe's powerful BIY traffic and scheduling platform, Myvideoplace, streamlining the workflow from channel origination to secure transmission.

viàGroupe plans to expand the network to ultimately support 30 channels reaching 40 million viewers — all driven from the same fully virtualized, software-defined media facility.

viàGroupe is using Versio to:

Support IP-based playout for 20-channel deployment

Fuse the reliability of traditional broadcast operations with the agility of a fully virtualized media facility

Streamline workflow from channel origination to secure transmission

Maximize revenue opportunities by tightly integrating playout and business operations

Simplify operations, allowing staff to concentrate on video quality and other on-air concerns

Use case: Software-based hybrid business continuity

Sharjah Broadcasting Authority (SBA) is a government organization dedicated to developing the media industry in the Emirate of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates.

As part of a strategic business continuity initiative, SBA implemented a hybrid disaster recovery solution at their backup center in Al Thaid, using software-defined technology in a primarily IP-connected environment. The backup system, built on Imagine's Versio™ modular playout, maintains perfect synchronization with SBA's main playout site, with full content mirroring to allow seamless switchover in the event of any problems.

While SBA's primary objectives were preventing service disruption of its four television channels and protecting an extensive archive, the scalable, software-based system also enables the broadcaster to support future expansions and transition to full IP at a pace that works for their business.

Sharjah Broadcasting Authority is using Versio to:

Provide full cover for four television channels and protect an extensive archive

Support expansion of operations, including additional channels to reach new audiences across the region

Take an important step in their transition to IP networks and virtualization

Help their staff get up to speed on deploying and operating software-based and IP technologies

Continue supporting legacy SDI content while planning a complete migration of their main playout center

"By taking a virtualized software approach, we have achieved a highly scalable and flexible operation which is as reliable and efficient as a traditional playout system."

Andrey Drukker
Chief Technologist

Use case: Uncompressed HD over IP multichannel playout

NTV has ranked among the top three television channels in Russia for more than 20 years, drawing more than 39 million Russian viewers every week, and is an innovative force on the market.

Looking to expand operations to support new channels, NTV took the opportunity to move to an IP infrastructure for all-HD distribution — becoming one of the pioneers in the industry to implement uncompressed IP playout via SMPTE ST 2022-6.

NTV deployed Versio™ modular playout, virtualized on blade servers, and Versio™ IOX SAN storage, which allows scaling of storage and bandwidth without affecting existing media or interrupting on-air operations.

Currently delivering nine HD channels, the entirely software-based playout platform ensures that future expansion — which NTV is already planning — can be accomplished simply and quickly.

NTV is using Versio to:

Move to an uncompressed IP infrastructure for all-HD distribution

Implement all playout functionality — including graphics, loudness, subtitles, and SCTE-104 — in a single solution

Achieve a much higher channel density than a traditional playout installation

Leverage a microservices-based platform that enables easy format and feature updates with no interruption to mission-critical services

Reduce OpEx by deploying only what they need, when they need it

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Use case: Automated playout for 24/7 operation

Janata Television is based in Kathmandu, Nepal. The channel, which first went on air in 2017, delivers a 24/7 service of news, entertainment, and other content.

Aiming to establish themselves as a renowned media house in Nepal, Janata Television looked to ramp up productivity and reliability by deploying an automated playout and media-handling workflow based on virtualized software running on commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) hardware.

The Versio™ modular solution at Janata Television not only handles playout, but also provides the engine to design and drive workflows, while redundant signal paths and hardware ensure maximum reliability.

Most importantly, a user-friendly interface enabled staff to quickly become productive — developing their workflows and delivering great content to the audience across Nepal.

Janata is using Versio to:

Maximize productivity by automating playout and media management

Get an all-new playout system up and running without disrupting daily operations

Save space by deploying a compact, software-based solution
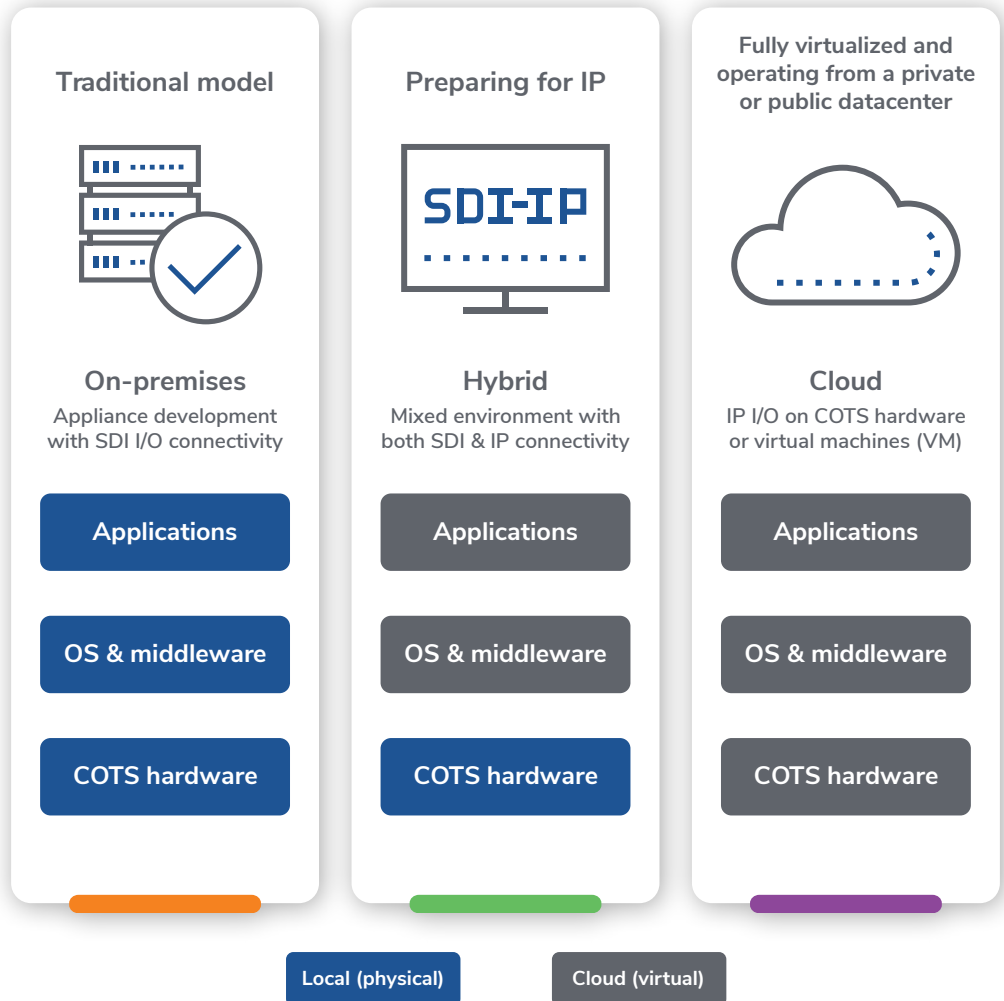
Ensure reliable 24/7 operation

Simplify workflow development via a future-proof, microservices-based design

What's the right playout workflow for me?

While migrating to IP, virtualized or cloud-based playout operations presents new opportunities, each tech transition also comes with its own set of challenges.

Scan this **handy guide** to compare the challenges and benefits of on-premises, hybrid, and cloud playout deployments — and determine which model is right for your current and future business.

Planning Guide:
Choose the Right Playout Deployment Model for Your Business

Introduction

Traditional model	Preparing for IP	Fully virtualized and operating from a private or public datacenter
	SDI-IP	
On-premises	**Hybrid**	**Cloud**
Appliance development with SDI I/O connectivity	Mixed environment with both SDI & IP connectivity	IP I/O on COTS hardware or virtual machines (VM)
Applications	Applications	Applications
OS & middleware	OS & middleware	OS & middleware
COTS hardware	COTS hardware	COTS hardware

Local (physical)   Cloud (virtual)

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9

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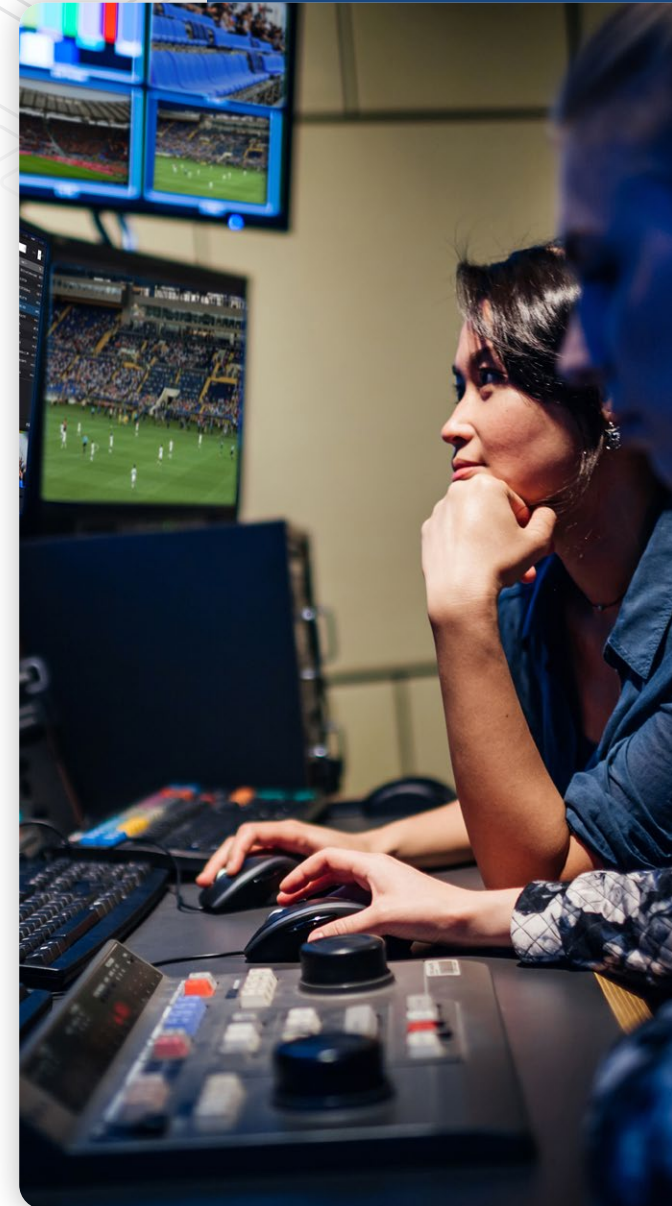
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