

Microsoft Announces Comprehensive Media Services Platform and Architectural Guidance for the Cloud

Windows Azure Media Services and Broadcast Reference Architecture empower customers to more easily design and build cost-effective cloud media solutions for a world of devices.

LAS VEGAS — April 16, 2012 — At the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) 2012 conference today, Microsoft Corp. announced new media services and guidance to enable content providers and customers to realize the power of cloud computing. The new cloud-based Windows Azure Media Services is designed to make creating, managing and delivering media to any device easier than ever by offering a comprehensive set of ready-to-use first- and third-party media technologies. Microsoft also published a new Broadcast Reference Architecture that offers prescriptive guidance on how media companies can architect their solutions to improve systems performance management as they move toward the cloud.

Windows Azure Media Services

Taking advantage of the worldwide Windows Azure cloud infrastructure, Windows Azure Media Services gives content providers and media partners the nearly unlimited capacity of the cloud to cost-effectively handle a huge volume of digital media and make it available in the format that customers want, when they want it. Windows Azure Media Services' ready-to-use services allow customers to simplify the creation of complex media workflows built on Microsoft Media Platform and third-party technologies.

“Our internal research shows that more than one-third of today’s Internet traffic is devoted to video consumption, and we expect that to grow to 80 percent by the end of 2015,” said Scott Guthrie, corporate vice president, Windows Azure application platform. “Not everyone has the expertise or capital required to build a media infrastructure, so Windows Azure Media Services enables companies everywhere to build custom media solutions that easily scale and adapt to meet consumers’ needs, wherever or however they consume it.”

Highlighting the diversity of solutions enabled by Windows Azure Media Services is a broad ecosystem of media partners, with many already integrating their technologies for customers to use in their own media solutions. These include high-speed transfers from Aspera Inc., content encoding from Digital Rapids Corp., ATEME and Dolby Laboratories Inc., content security from BuyDRM and Civolution, and video-on-demand streaming from Wowza Media Systems Inc. In addition, Windows Azure Media Services enables full-service media companies such as iStreamPlanet

Co. and Movidio Pty. Ltd. to host and offer complete workflow solutions to customers.

Windows Azure Media Services will also support an entire ecosystem of connected devices from some of the largest consumer electronics and manufacturers in the world. With support for Microsoft Smooth Streaming, HTTP Live Streaming and Flash media formats, Windows Azure Media Services will enable customers to reach almost any connected device, from Xbox 360, Windows Phone and Windows-based PCs to non-Microsoft platforms such as smart TVs, set-top boxes, MacOS, iOS and Android. To further enable true interoperability between media technologies from different vendors, Windows Azure Media Services will also include native support for MPEG-DASH (Dynamic Adaptive Streaming over HTTP), the International Organization for Standardization and Interoperability Executive Customer Council standards developed by Microsoft and other industry leaders that deliver an exceptional video experience for end users by automatically adapting to varying client and network conditions during playback.

To further showcase the capabilities of Windows Azure Media Services, Microsoft is working with Akamai and deltatre to deliver high-definition streaming video of the London 2012 Olympic Games across multiple countries through major rights holders in Europe, North America, Central America and South America. This will be the first time an event of this scale will be hosted and broadcast from a cloud platform to millions of viewers around the globe.

“Consumers now watch video anywhere, anytime and on any device,” said Bill Wheaton, senior vice president and general manager of Media at Akamai. “Working with partners such as Microsoft and deltatre, we’re eager for the Olympic Games to start and for the powerful combination of Windows Azure Media Services and Akamai’s SOLA Media Solutions to deliver a high-quality viewing experience on a global scale.” Customers can visit <http://www.windowsazure.com/media> to sign up for the preview of Windows Azure Media Services.

Broadcast Reference Architecture

Microsoft’s goal is to provide media and cable companies with the necessary tools and guidance to make decisions and deliver technologies that enable powerful business transformation. The Broadcast Reference Architecture provides the way forward for media organizations to assess current technology, resources and processes; to lay the foundation for future success; and to provide flexibility to allow businesses to grow, adapt and innovate quickly and in a cost-efficient manner.

Microsoft published the Broadcast Reference Architecture for the first time today and has worked with several partners, including Harris Corp., Tata Consultancy Services Ltd. and Decentrix Inc., to roll out this reference architecture. The Broadcast Reference Architecture white paper is available at <http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/news/presskits/telecom/docs/BroadcastReferenceArchitecture.pdf>. More information about Microsoft's products and services for media and cable companies is available at <http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/news/presskits/telecom/media.aspx>.

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