

Media Server News From NAB

Posted At : April 12, 2011 11:46 AM | Posted By : Stefan Richter

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It's that time of the year again and **NAB** is in full swing. Unexpectedly there has been a flurry of news coming out of Las Vegas, so here is a quick summary of the topics surrounded Media Servers such as FMS and Wowza.

First up is Wowza and their 'Any Screen Done Right' offering. This includes a preview of Wowza Media Server 3 and upcoming add-ons. First off is Wowza Transcoder. This add-on takes advantage of commodity hardware to transform incoming live streams from encoders, IP cameras, IPTV headends, and other live sources into multiple stream sets for H.264-everywhere adaptive bitrate delivery using Flash RTMP and HTTP Dynamic Streaming, Apple HLS, and Silverlight Smooth Streaming. Wowza Transcoder can also be used for non-adaptive streaming using any transport protocol supported by Wowza Media Server 3, including RTMP, RTSP/RTP, MPEG-TS, and HTTP.

Wowza Network DVR is a live stream cache that stores content in a normalized format accessible to Wowza Media Server 3 for any-screen layout. Wowza nDVR enables Wowza licensees to increase revenues and viewer engagement by delivering live linear streams as time-shifted services to any screen. It also supports trick-play features such as live-stream pause, rewind, and resume, and enables content publishers and service providers to develop premium catch-up TV services to individualize the viewer experience.

You can find Wowza at the 2011 NAB Show, Booth SU9313, where they will demonstrate the Wowza Media Server 3 platform.

General availability of Wowza Media Server 3 is expected in Q3 2011. All current Wowza Media Server 2 licensees will be eligible for a free upgrade to the new platform. The price for Wowza Media Server 3 will remain at \$995 for a single Perpetual edition license, and \$65 (or less) per month for Subscription edition instances. Pricing for AddOn components will be announced at a later date.

Next up is Flash Media Server where the focus on delivery to multiple platforms continues on. It is clear that both Wowza and Adobe recognise the importance of emerging mobile platforms as well as TV and STBs, and pretty much all new features in either platform have this at their core.

Kevin Towes, Product Manager for FMS, posted some details of the FMS sneak-peaks on [his blog](#). The major new feature that is being announced is HLS (HTTP Live Streaming). HLS is an MPEG2 transport stream (container) used by devices such as the Apple iPad 2. By adding support for HLS within the Flash Media Server, Adobe will be able to reach browsers supporting HLS through HTML5 (such as Safari) or devices where Adobe Flash is not installed. Where Flash is installed, Flash Media Server packages the stream using MPEG4-fragments (F4F) to deliver video over HTTP to Flash.

On the encoding side, Adobe is previewing the next version of Adobe Flash Media Live Encoder which adds support for more platforms and devices, including Android, Apple iOS and Samsung TVs.

In summary, both Wowza and FMS are playing catch-up with one another on certain features, and it is clear that the new battleground for streaming video is the area of

emerging devices and mobile platforms. Wowza have certainly pushed the boat out early on by supporting not only RTMP and Flash, but also other protocols and platforms. Combine this with a competitive price tag and you got yourself a winning formula.

There is no doubt in my mind that FMS's days as a real-time collaborative platform are numbered as every new release adds features for new streaming capabilities. As a developer I find it increasingly difficult to work with FMS due to its lack of developer and debugging tools, all of which are nearing the 10 year anniversary with no significant update since version 1.0.

If you are new to either Wowza or FMS then you should consider both platforms for delivering streaming video, but (and I say this with a heavy heart) I would not start afresh building a complex RTC-based application on FMS. For those types of apps I would make Wowza my point of call, and the main reason I am sticking to FMS for my existing projects is down to a lack of resources for porting fairly complex applications to Wowza at this point - but it will happen and on the RTC front at least I think it's time to declare that Wowza is pushing ahead. This is not so much because of better features but because of a much tighter developer workflow with all the niceties a Java based development environment brings.