GV AMPP:
THE TIME IS NOW

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The new cloud service from Grass Valley has shown itself to be a broadcast platform for the future. As the CTO of Grass Valley, it's Chuck Meyer's job to understand not just what broadcasters need now, but what they might need in the months and years to come. Use of cloud-based services for remote production has been on the media industry agenda for some time. The tools were available, but media companies circled the technology, few seeming ready to take the plunge.

Then the year 2020 arrived and with it a once-in-a-century pandemic. The rush for remote production capacity was on. Suddenly, it was an economic necessity to run everything, from international networks to esports, using distributed teams based out of their living rooms.

"People have wanted to do at-home production for the last few years," says Meyer. "It was always a topic at conferences, but it's been forced into becoming a reality. Everybody wants the same thing: 'I need all my people at home. I have to make my creative decisions at home – and I need tools that let me do that.'

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Grass Valley had already been anticipating this model of distributed cloud production, working on patented solutions for the biggest hurdle in making all of this work well – the effective management of timing. "We've created a solution that ensures operators and producers can access the resources they need, and it feels like real time," explains Meyer.

Grass Valley released its Agile Media Processing Platform (GV AMPP) as a taster showcasing its cloud-based master control switcher. At the beginning of the year, as lockdowns accelerated, Blizzard Entertainment needed to automate playback and other capabilities for the launch of the game company's Overwatch League. Using AMPP, Activision Blizzard Esports (ABE) production teams created configurable virtual master control rooms, accessible from multiple locations. Multiple distribution streams with separate graphics and languages for each audience region were produced by a single operator, using one web-based interface. "

"As we've come on to other customers, especially as sports gets back on air, we've seen a lot of interest in spinning up new applications enabling live production workflows," says Meyer. Now that remote production has not just been accepted, but embraced, media companies can move beyond reacting to a crisis and think in new ways about everything, from workflows to how they create content.

"For a lot of this year it's been desperation – 'I have to get something on air' – but now as they get used to the platform, they realise it's perfect for what they need to do," says Meyer. GV AMPP is the core technology of the GV Media Universe, Grass Valley's vision for an entirely software and cloud-based media future. The cloud-based SaaS platform allows broadcasters to fully leverage the power of elastic compute. Built for the cloud and accessed through a browser-based UI, the platform offers unprecedented flexibility to spin up or spin down broadcast workflow applications as needed — and pay only for services used. GV AMPP applications include tools for master control switching, multiviewer, clip player, recording and graphics, with more on the way. In developing a cloud solution that needed to be robust enough for live broadcast, Grass Valley looked closely at the potential available bandwidth problems and latency issues – a worry that has certainly plagued potential cloud production adopters. "When you get into the cloud, your compute resource and available bandwidth is really a statistical availability, not a hard availability," explains Meyer. "These statistics, once harnessed by AMPP, enable monetisation of elastic compute."

The next step for Grass Valley's AMPP is to build on its success with even more cloud-based applications meeting different media production needs.

"From what our customers are saying, we're doing things with latency management and user interface that other people have been trying to do, but aren't doing," Meyer concludes. "But, perhaps more importantly, we've done the hard work of envisioning the technologies necessary to make the timing of applications, being controlled anywhere, appear to each operator as fully synchronised.

"We've harnessed these thoughts and patented our approach. We're excited for the world to see it when it's fully realised."

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