

DaCast

Case Study - Online Video Platform DaCast replaces in-house analytics with a more comprehensive, real-time analytics solution from MediaMelon

INTRODUCTION

This Case Study describes how and why [award-winning](#) online streaming and video hosting platform DaCast switched from using analytics capabilities that had been developed in-house and adopted a more comprehensive and higher performance analytics solution from MediaMelon. It also describes the direct business benefits that DaCast enjoyed after making this transition.

DaCast is headquartered in San Francisco with offices in London and has been offering live streaming and video hosting services to customers including Red Bull, ADP and Nokia since October 2010. DaCast's all-in-one [streaming solutions](#) includes: high quality delivery using the Akamai CDN; secure video hosting with 24/7 support; support for an all-device HTML5 player; and allows their customers to generate revenue by monetizing their content.

In 2018 DaCast was the winner of the Streaming Media Magazine Readers' Choice Award for Best Video Platform in the SMB category as well as being a finalist in the Enterprise and Education categories.



CHALLENGES

The decision by DaCast to move away from its in-house analytics solution and work with a third-party analytics specialist was in response to two key challenges it faced:

Customer Demand for a more Comprehensive Analytics Capability: Online Video Platforms are complex systems containing multiple functional sub-systems that have to be integrated to form a single robust platform. The DaCast platform always had an analytics sub-system, developed in-house, that included some core functionality. However, as the customer base and system usage grew over time, many of its larger customers were looking for more comprehensive analytics capabilities from the DaCast platform. Expanding the in-house-developed analytics capability to meet the needs of these customers would have been time consuming and expensive so DaCast decided to look for a third-party solution. DaCast did not want their customers to have to log on to a separate analytics site so the solution they chose needed to integrate easily into their existing platform.

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The Need for True Real-Time Performance: DaCast operates a high-volume platform, serving millions of streams to customers in virtually every country in the world. DaCast's in-house analytics solution relied upon data usage information provided by their CDN partners to provide usage and billing information to their operations teams and to their customers. While the usage information was accurate there was no real-time visibility, with consumption information being delivered by partners up to two hours after an event was over. DaCast's in-house analytics solution offered no real-time visibility into the data being consumed by its customers, and data usage is a significant part of the operational cost of an [online video platform](#).

"We were delivering first-class live streaming video, but unfortunately the analytics was tape delayed," said Stephane Roulland, CEO at DaCast. "We are one of the leading OTT streaming providers on the planet, offering the highest quality, cost competitive streaming solutions available, and we wanted to make sure our analytics capabilities matched the performance of the rest of our platform. We decided it would be better if we outsourced this portion of our platform to experts in analytics, just as we outsource encoding to experts in video compression."



DaCast CEO - Stephane Roulland

SOLUTION

After careful evaluation of the available analytics solutions from various vendors in the market, DaCast selected and quickly integrated the [SmartSight Analytics™](#) solution from MediaMelon into their existing online video platform. SmartSight was able to provide the comprehensive, real-time analytics capabilities that they and their customers were looking for. MediaMelon helped DaCast by providing:

Supercharged Analytics Capabilities: SmartSight is a fully-feature video streaming analytics platform. It is a modular solution which allows customers to tailor the analytics package they use to meet their specific operational needs. As DaCast supports a large number of customers with differing requirements they opted to deploy MediaMelon's full analytics capability across their entire customer base.

The full analytics package they selected includes the following components:

- **Core Analytics Platform** provides the high performance, base analytics required by every OTT service provider.
- **Subscriber Insights Module** adds deep insights into individual and group viewership trends.
- **Content Insights Module** adds deep insights into the popularity and performance of entertainment assets.
- **Advertising Insights Module** adds deep insights into the success of advertising campaigns.
- **Operational Insights Module** provides real-time insights into the viewing sessions of individual subscribers.

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All of this functionality is available for DaCast to use globally across its entire network and base of thousands of customers, and for each of their customers to use individually across their specific sub-networks. DaCast can manage their global network and its customers can also manage theirs.

Some of the features that DaCast and its customers found most beneficial after implementing SmartSight were:

- **Real-time Analytics:** allowing all DaCast's users to monitor the performance of their live events in real-time
- **Better User Interface:** including the ability to customize the video dashboard, switch between different displays and compare the performance of video files
- **Higher Level of Detail:** for better monitoring and optimization of the video strategy

"Data is important. However, without applying meaningful analytics, data is just numbers on a screen," continued Roulland. "Analytics for DaCast live streams provides critical information while live broadcasts are in progress. Because we believe it is so important we now provide this to all of our clients as an integral part of our product offering, while many other video platforms don't include this feature at all, on any plan level."

Rapid Media Player Integration: MediaMelon has a robust player SDK which is integrated with a broad range of open-source and commercial media players across a wide range of platform types. The media player that DaCast uses was developed in-house and so a custom integration was required, but this effort only took a few weeks to complete. Once integrated, DaCast was able to collect real-time data about all of the transactions taking place within the media players it supported across all of its web and mobile platforms.

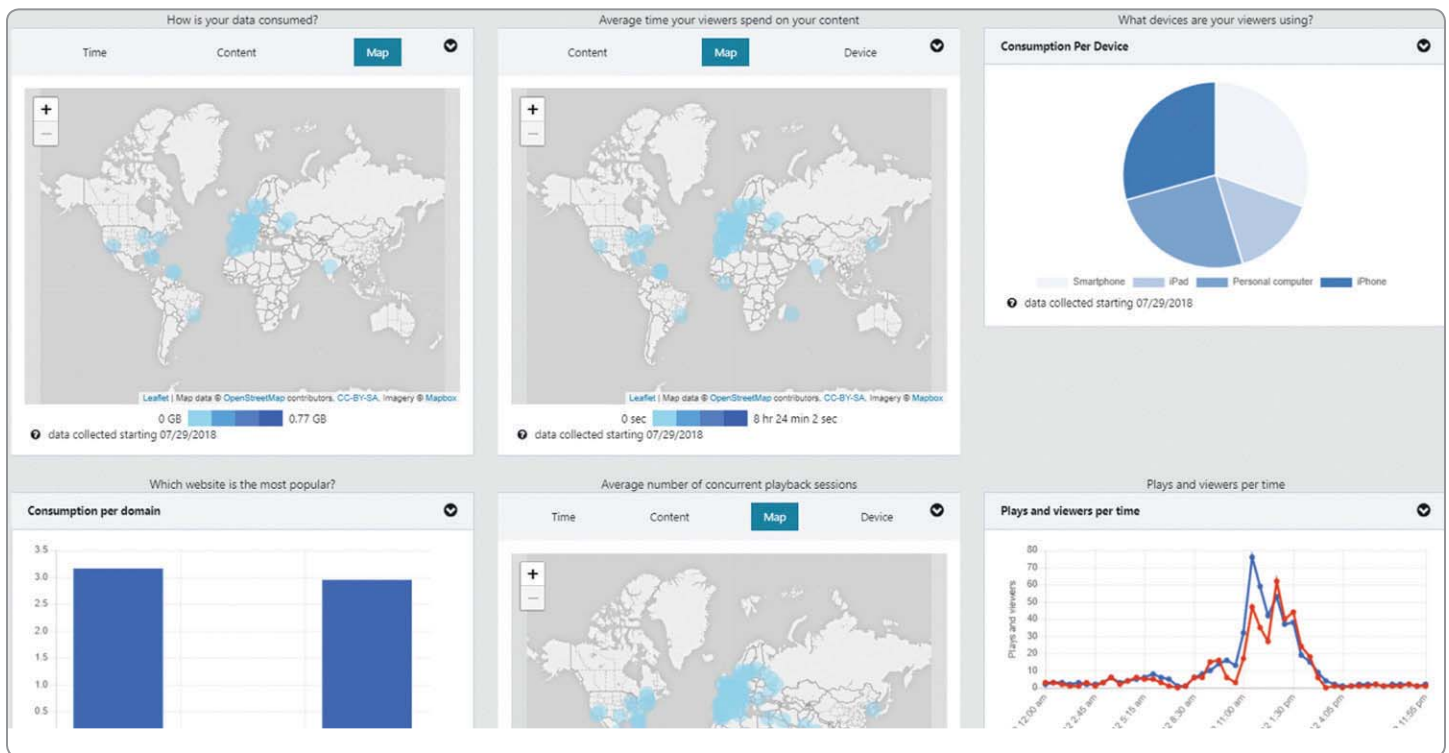
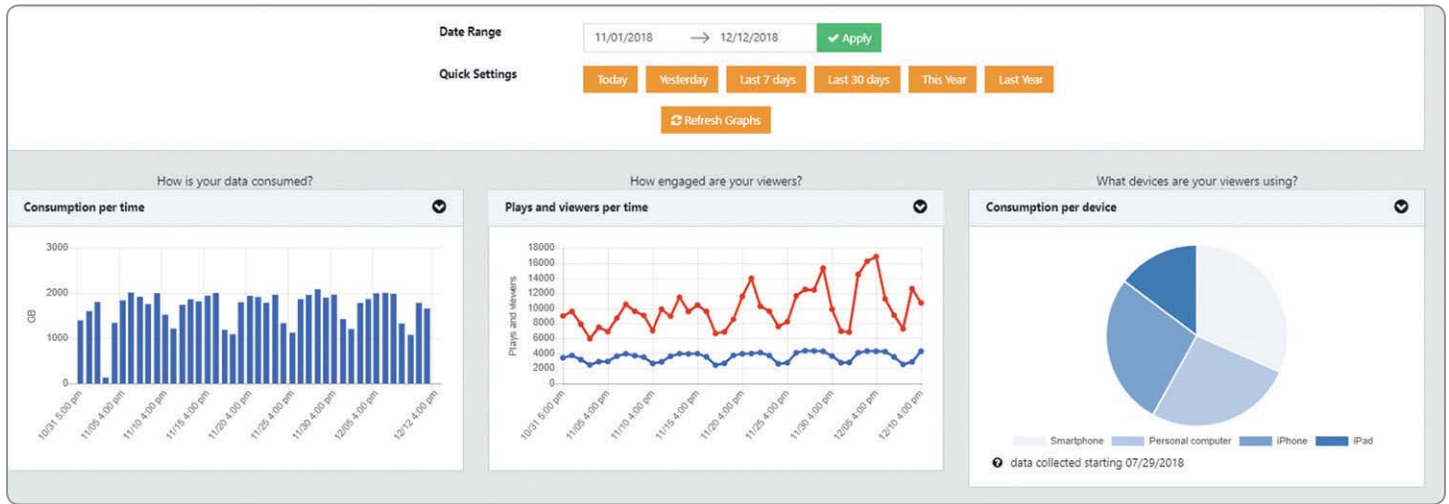
This universal player integration, along with the built-for-speed architecture of the SmartSight Analytics solution, meant that DaCast and its customers could finally get comprehensive, real-time visibility and analysis of the performance of the platform. For DaCast this included the much-needed visibility of data consumption independently of its CDN partners. The update allowed usage information to be delivered live within a minute of the start of an event, as opposed to only being available many hours after an event had ended.



Flexible Platform Integration: The SmartSight Analytics solution includes a comprehensive set of analytics dashboards that allow users to visualize the various performance aspects of the platform. SmartSight also supports a comprehensive set of APIs through which all of the data that has been collected and analyzed can be made available to third party visualization systems. It also enables SmartSight to ingest and analyze data from sources other than the media player, such as the headend or the CDN as examples.

DaCast decided to perform the visualization themselves, taking the MediaMelon analytics information via these published APIs and using it to populate analytics dashboards they created themselves based on custom views they knew their clients would find most useful. DaCast provides these dashboards as standard to its clients, seeing it as a premium feature that will attract and retain important customers.

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Examples of the User Interface - created by DaCast for MediaMelon SmartSight Analytics

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BENEFITS

Eliminating Upfront Investment: Licensing the SmartSight platform from MediaMelon enabled DaCast to get instant access to market-leading analytics capabilities with virtually no upfront engineering investment. In addition, MediaMelon’s usage-based licensing scheme aligned perfectly with the usage-based pricing model that DaCast uses with its customers allowing the cost of analytics to scale in line with the revenue that is generated.

“We knew we wanted to upgrade our analytics, but it was only one of many things we had had to work on with our team of 20 people,” said Roulland. “We decided that we needed to outsource this piece, because it is complex and becoming increasingly important as our business continues to grow. Our team and our customers are extremely satisfied with the outcome of the collaboration with MediaMelon. They have allowed us to enhance both the functionality and the quality of service we provide to our clients by delivering analytics and insights in super-fast time.”

Creating a Better Product to Bring to Market: Adding a more advanced analytics capability helped DaCast address a direct request from some of its most important customers, but it also enhanced the overall capability of their platform for its entire customer base. Having a more comprehensive product makes their [video streaming platform](#) more attractive, giving DaCast an advantage in the ever-growing but competitive video streaming marketplace.

“As well as supporting VOD playout capabilities, a significant part of our business is live streaming,” said Roulland. “Now we can track the metrics of each of our live and VOD clients individually in real-time, as well as get a collective view of our entire ecosystem.”

Corporate Identity was Maintained: DaCast wanted to upgrade the analytics capability they were offering to their customers but needed the third-party system they selected to integrate seamlessly with their existing platform. SmartSight’s APIs allowed DaCast to do just that. It also meant that their internal teams could create the KPI dashboard views they knew their customers would want, using data, analytics and insights generated by the MediaMelon solution. DaCast is using third party analytics presented to their customers with a totally in-house look and feel.

Independent Real-Time Auditing: A large part of the cost of operating an Online Video Platform is the fees paid by operators to CDN companies. Without a comprehensive analytics platform it is difficult to verify the usage information provided by CDNs, and those CDNs do not provide real-time usage information. SmartSight is able to monitor data usage on all playback platforms independently, including well known native players which do not provide that usage information willingly. It also allows DaCast to measure data usage easily on a customer by customer basis.

Fraud Prevention: Implementing real-time, ultra-detailed viewing analytics also increased the security of the platform, allowing both DaCast and its clients to see immediately if something unexpected is occurring in terms of data usage or user numbers.

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CONCLUSION

Advanced video streaming analytics is now a critical component in any Online Video Platform. It allows operators to monitor key performance metrics within their network and customer base, and to deliver the key subscriber, content, advertising and operation insights that their customers are now demanding. It is no longer enough just to be able to stream video reliably. Customers want to know exactly how their content is being consumed. Which content is being watched and for how long? Who is watching what and where are they? What device are they using? How is ad revenue growing?

The partnership with MediaMelon enabled DaCast to overcome all of the analytics challenges it was facing. By deciding to outsource analytics DaCast was able to implement this specialist element without becoming distracted by something that was not part of its core competency. The cloud-based SmartSight solution integrated quickly and easily with DaCast's media player and its delivery platform, and upgraded functionality was available to their customers in less than a month. DaCast was able to present its customers with the data and analytics they had requested using dashboards created within its own portal, using SmartSight to collect and process data from its players and present this to the platform. MediaMelon's consumption-based pricing model meant that there were no upfront implementation fees for DaCast to consider, with ongoing costs simply scaling with customer revenue.

MediaMelon is here to help OTT operators perfect the experience they deliver to their customers. If you operate an Online Video Platform and would like to understand the options for outsourcing video streaming analytics to an expert in the field, we would love to speak to you.