



New England Patriots Go Long with StreamGuys

Modern NFL dynasty seamlessly transitions live and on-demand streaming services to StreamGuys with the help of in-depth reporting and podcast creation tools.



History

The New England Patriots are among the most storied franchises in the National Football League. With six Super Bowl rings between 2002 and 2019 plus the longest active consecutive NFL playoff appearance streak at present time (10 seasons), the team enjoys one of the more dedicated fan bases in New England, across the country, and throughout the world.

That fan dedication translates to hunger for Patriots related news and entertainment, and the Patriots have long been innovators in how they deliver such content to their fans. The team was the first sports franchise in the world to launch nightly, Internet-only video shows streamed live to fans worldwide. That was soon followed by on-demand content, and the team's media department has gradually expanded its live and on-demand streaming services over the past 22 years.

“We were on the forefront of streaming services in many respects, from on-demand podcasts to live press conferences... We were also pioneers in the simulcast of live sports-related TV shows online, and we continue to innovate in this area as recently as this year’s (2019) Super Bowl LIII, where we launched a special program stream called Patriots Right Now.” - Fred Kirsch, vice president of content and publisher, New England Patriots.

Situation

In addition to enjoying life as an NFL dynasty, the New England Patriots were experiencing yearly growth with their streaming strategy, both in terms of content and audience. Their CDN and streaming media provider had served them well over many years. Sometimes, however, circumstances force a change.

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“We had been with our streaming vendor for a very long time, and they decided to close out their business...” said Jana Gauthier, director of streaming media. “Our partners at TuneIn recommended StreamGuys, and we soon discovered they had experience delivering NFL-related podcast content. We certainly needed a new service provider that could accommodate all of our streaming services and support delivery to all of our audience platforms. In reality, the most important

requirement was to have a seamless transition from one service provider to another. StreamGuys delivered that, yet managed to provide something a little extra special along the way.”





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Solution

StreamGuys immediately went to work architecting a delivery network to transcode and distribute live video and audio content to serve web and mobile audiences, serving content to the Patriots website, radio partners like TuneIn, social media feeds and other destinations. While making these modest goals a reality, they also added special sauce to the mix – particularly on the podcasting side.

The transition has been so seamless that on the front end, nothing much has changed for the Patriots’ operational staff; they just continue to go about their business. Yet, there is more at play technically than meets the eye – and most of it comes down to the quiet integration of SGrecast, a SaaS-based toolset that can automatically create podcasts, side channels and rebroadcasts. In addition to creating on-demand content, SGrecast transcodes a single stream at the server side to support high-quality distribution and output over even the most bandwidth-challenged networks. This ensures that the Patriots are providing a robust end user experience compatible to virtually any consumer device.

“We modified SGrecast to be API-driven, which allowed the Patriots to leverage their existing front-end system without any disruption or learning curve...” said Eduardo Martinez, Director of Technology of StreamGuys. “We customized SGrecast to integrate as a component of their enterprise workflow for the purpose of audio content creation and management. The interface is configured to be very expedient and easy to use when it comes to creating a podcast, populating it without important data, and even importing feeds to avoid re-uploading content. The most important part was to make this transition as seamless as possible.”

“We simply pull and post-produce audio files from the live content, and manually upload them into our CMS. Those files are immediately passed onto StreamGuys...” Jana Gauthier stated. SGrecast supports 14 audio podcasts and approximately 16 podcast directories. Additional expansion is expected, including the option to support video podcasts at any time. Gauthier adds that live content is served to StreamGuys as an active stream, with most content pushed at certain times of each day.

Benefits

While the SGrecast solution has optimized the New England Patriots’ podcast workflow, Gauthier points to StreamGuys’ professionalism as the biggest benefit, emphasizing appreciation for their personalized customer service.

“I appreciate having a one-on-one relationship with my representative, which I didn’t really have with our previous vendor... If I have a question, I can pick up the phone and reach out directly. The service has been extremely friendly and reliable. StreamGuys have also helped us maintain an important level of reporting that is critical to our business strategy.” – said Jana Gauthier.

Gauthier is referring to SGreports, one of several business intelligence solutions that StreamGuys offers to its customers. “We dig into SGreports to measure performance of both live and podcast content. For the latter, we look at the number of downloads occurring at the different content channels we offer, and can pinpoint the location of those downloads. For live content, we are looking at performance during the broadcast window, such as unique number of visitors and the associated geographical data.”

Kirsch adds that all of this information helps them make important business decisions around their content and their streams. “We meet on a weekly basis to review all of our audio and video content, and evaluate overall performance,” he said. “SGreports helps us understand what is performing well and what is delivering fewer returns, and then make important strategic decisions around new directions. They have been an important partner in our streaming media journey.”

