

Successful CDN Boosts Revenue with Wowza-Enabled Flash Streaming Services for Broadcasters



Overview StreamGuys offers a variety of streaming media solutions and tools enabling superior-quality delivery and monetization of digital media. Through constant dedication to improving the customer experience, StreamGuys has enjoyed continued success across all sectors of Internet broadcasting. Founded in 2000, their customers include such well-known companies as Cisco Systems, NASA and New Balance, and such broadcasters as WNYC, KQED and Chicago Public Radio.

Challenge In 2007, StreamGuys knew that Flash streaming was about to become the next must-have service for customers. The question, however, was how to offer differentiated Flash streaming services that would retain and expand their customer base, while at the same time preserve their competitive price point.

Solution Wowza's award-winning Wowza Media Server Pro, named the #1 choice for media streaming by readers of Streaming Media Magazine, enables StreamGuys to deliver highly successful services to customers, thanks to its industrial strength performance, friction-free licensing and exclusive features such as SHOUTcast®-to-Flash streaming and H.264/AAC+ live RTSP/RTP and MPEG-TS encoder support.

Benefits

- Wowza Pro's exclusive SHOUTcast-to-Flash streaming has empowered radio broadcasting stalwarts WNYC and Chicago Public Radio to deliver their online streams in an attractive Flash player
- Wowza Pro's unique RTSP/RTP, MPEG-TS & SHOUTcast capabilities enable friction-free Flash streaming without forcing broadcasters to upgrade infrastructure
- Wowza Pro's Software Subscription licensing lets StreamGuys take control of marginal costs and boost profitability
- Wowza Pro's industrial strength stability, scalability and performance enables StreamGuys to confidently support their ever-growing customer base

StreamGuys has developed a premiere content delivery network for radio and TV broadcasters, media and enterprise customers. StreamGuys' network utilizes multiple top-quality, tier 1 providers to ensure reliable capacity for global distribution. The company offers a 100% network guarantee and around-the-clock expert emergency support. StreamGuys consistently improves their offerings by selecting best-of-breed infrastructure components. It is this investment that gives StreamGuys' customers the best and most robust services available.

Wowza Media Server Pro Software Subscription has given us greater flexibility than ever in dynamically serving the needs of our customers.

*—Jonathan Speaker, COO,
StreamGuys*

As one of the largest and fastest-growing networks, StreamGuys empowers customers to simply and cost-effectively scale service as their need dictates. "Our services allow both small and large broadcasters to begin services at an appropriate level," said Jonathan Speaker, COO, StreamGuys. "We allow you to bypass the fixed costs typically associated with scaling up or back along with your delivery needs." It has been such flexibility that has made StreamGuys the go-to provider for companies who demand an individual, customized streaming media solution.

"The days of trying to force unnecessary services on technically unsophisticated customers are long gone," added Speaker. "Customers these days won't tolerate such nonsense. Customers want services that dynamically change along with their businesses." He continued, "Truth is, they will not settle for anything less, which is why StreamGuys has engineered itself down to the last server as an organization that can change as rapidly and as completely as the companies they serve."

Moving Forward with the Past

StreamGuys began 2007 with a mixture of excitement and concern. YouTube had roared into the market, fulfilling the long-awaited promise of user-friendly, browser-based video, and putting the rest of the industry on notice. "We took one look at YouTube, and realized right then and there that it wouldn't be long before our customers would begin asking for similar solutions," said Eduardo Martinez, Senior Systems Administrator, StreamGuys. "We also knew we had to act fast. Otherwise, we were risking an entire new vertical of our business, which rested on our unique mix of the latest-and-greatest technology and the most aggressive cost structure."

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***–Eduardo Martinez,
Senior Systems Administrator,
StreamGuys***

The situation was a lot more complicated than "out with the old, in with the new." StreamGuys needed a solution that was both future-proofed and backwards-compatible to enable them to make the transition to Flash streaming services both quick and cost-effective.

"There was a list of issues as long as my arm," joked Martinez. "Because we were streaming pioneers, with long-standing customers who invested in existing technologies like SHOUTcast, we had to consider conversion issues in addition to the quality of content in new formats." He added, "Flash cross-platform functionality is great, but if you have to uproot everything that our customers have invested in, it becomes prohibitive, both economically and operationally."

Making Services Friction-Free

Right from the beginning, Wowza's exclusive SHOUTcast-to-Flash streaming attracted broadcasting stalwarts WNYC, Chicago Public Radio and KQED. The reason? The broadcasters didn't have to change anything on their end - they continued to pass their existing SHOUTcast streams to StreamGuys and get the benefit of universal Flash streaming in return.

It didn't take us long to figure out... Wowza was the future of streaming media.

***–Jonathan Speaker, COO,
StreamGuys***

"Chicago Public Radio, home of This American Life, the journalistically acclaimed broadcast and #1 iTunes podcast, was particularly thrilled with Wowza," said Martinez. "In addition to the ubiquity of Flash, Wowza's support of legacy streaming technologies and existing codecs made getting broadcast content to Flash simple and friction-free. Really, it's not an exaggeration to say that Wowza quickly became our biggest seller hands down, increasing revenue exponentially."

Success didn't stop Wowza from continuing to innovate. With the launch of Wowza Media Server Pro 1.5, in the spring of 2008, StreamGuys once again had a perfect solution for its customers. "The feature everyone was asking for was live H.264 streaming in Flash," said Martinez. "As with Flash on-demand, the big question was how to do it simply and cost-effectively. Sure enough, Wowza was the answer."

Wowza Media Server Pro 1.5 boasted such features as H.264 and AAC+ streaming. But what made it truly revolutionary was its exclusive support for existing RTP/RTSP and MPEG-TS encoders that are prevalent in broadcaster networks. The benefit to broadcasters and service providers was clear. Not only

did Wowza offer them a live, HD-capable solution at a fraction of the cost of Adobe FMS, they did so, again, without broadcasters' incurring any additional upgrade costs.

"It's no accident that Wowza has won so many awards," said Martinez. "Their product is nothing short of a marvel. It has performed perfectly and stayed ahead of the market. To come out of nowhere and generate such amazing buzz in such a short amount of time, even beating out the likes of Microsoft and Adobe in popularity, may seem hard to believe, unless you have experienced the product first-hand. Then it makes perfect sense."

Perfect Solution for Service Providers

Wowza's commitment to StreamGuys and the broader service provider market did not stop there. Besides innovating on the technology front, Wowza continues to make Flash streaming completely friction-free for service providers both economically and operationally. Gaining from its experience with offering Wowza Pro on Amazon EC2, Wowza has created the Wowza Pro Software Subscription, a licensing model that allows providers to add or delete servers as needed and pay only for the servers used. StreamGuys embraced it right out of the shoot.

Wowza Pro is simply the most technologically advanced and economical Flash streaming solution for service providers.

***–Jonathan Speaker, COO,
StreamGuys***

"It was yet another illustration that Wowza truly understands and cares about our business," said Speaker. "With this friction-free approach, we can respond to customer demand in real-time and take control of the capacities and marginal cost for providing Flash streaming services."

He continued, "Such flexibility is so crucial that a provider who cannot offer it is at a serious disadvantage. Wowza Pro is simply the most technologically advanced and economical Flash streaming solution for service providers."

Other significant benefits of Wowza Pro Software Subscription is that it requires no up-front investment, no minimum number of servers, carries no per-GB "Flash tax" and includes all future software upgrades. Also crucial, and perhaps most attractive for StreamGuys, is the free, continuous upgrades that Wowza offers.

"Wowza is continuously adding more functionality, which StreamingGuys is quick to evaluate and implement. Equally beneficial to our customers is the open architecture of the Wowza server, which enables developers and 3rd party companies to bring new features to market."

New features in the StreamGuys' pipeline include a customer subscription system built for Wowza as well as the Content Management System (CMS) and customer player services to empower customers to improve how they publish, manage and target the content they own.

"The combination of Wowza's constant enhancements and open architecture has given us a uniquely competitive advantage," added Speaker. "In lieu of expensive out-of-the-box solutions, we have a cost-effective, manageable and innovative solution which gives us a powerful real-time platform for responding to customer needs."

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CS-00009 01/09