At NAB 2012, the joint initiative by the Advanced Media Workflow Association (AMWA) and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) to create a Framework for Interoperable Media Services (FIMS) will be demonstrated at the FIMS/AMWA, booth N517. This follows a highly successful first showing at NAB and IBC in 2011 at which senior executives from both media companies and vendors showed great excitement for the potential for our industry. Here are some of the questions we received.

Q. Should I take the FIMS initiative seriously?
A. Ultimately, you must decide. The EBU and the AMWA have been keen supporters of Service Orientated Media Workflows ever since the idea was first proposed. The cost savings that can be achieved through an open architecture and a broadly accepted industry standard has great appeal.

Q. What will FIMS do for my business? How will it make my life easier?
A. For a long time media companies have operated with completely separate media workflows and business systems. Also program workflows were “hard wired” so that processes had to be performed in a strict order sometimes resulting in under-utilized processes and bottle-necks. FIMS allows much greater efficiency and flexibility, where each process can be called upon as a “service” when needed and direct connection with business systems becomes possible.

Q. Is the industry taking this seriously? What level of interest is there?
A. The list of media companies and vendors that actively support FIMS grows continuously. FIMS now counts nearly 60 member companies who have signed the Participation Agreement and contribute technology in a compensation free framework. Nearly 20 media companies recently joined the FIMS Business Board that guarantees priorities are set to meet business needs.

Q. Can I realistically expect to build a system using products from a range of manufacturers?
A. Yes! The objective is to establish a connection standard that will allow “best of breed” systems to be built using products from a wide range of vendors. Ask your preferred suppliers about their involvement in the FIMS initiative.

Q. What makes FIMS possible? Are there standards that everyone can refer to?
A. The v1.0 specification has been completed and is under the final review stage at AMWA and EBU. FIMS 1.0 already fully supports acquisition, transfer and transform. More services are already announced for Phase 2 including repositories and quality control management. All participants have agreed that their contributions to the specification are provided for free, permanently.

Q. Are there early examples of working systems?
A. Several demonstrations were made at NAB and IBC in 2011. FIMS members have started implementation in their facilities and you are welcome to come and see early results on our booth.

Q. What can I do next?
A. You can express support in different ways:
1. Anyone can see the progress at http://wiki.amwa.tv/ebu/
2. If you wish to join in the work, you will need to sign a Participation Agreement (online) to become a FIMS Participant. This is free and open to all.
3. You can financially support the initiative by becoming a FIMS Demo Supporter for IBC2012.

MORE TECHNICAL DETAIL

Q. What is FIMS in technical terms?
A. It is a framework of service definitions for implementing media related operations using a Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) approach and promoting interoperability and reusability of services. FIMS defines service models with associated management, error handling, communication, time awareness, and security components.

Q. How will FIMS change my workflows and processes?
A. Today’s file-based workflows are often “hard wired” and disconnected from business processes. FIMS defines open services that are loosely coupled thereby enabling multivendor services to be integrated and creating “best-in-class” media systems. The services can span a wide domain of operations and permit integration of FIMS into business and management systems. Bottom line, it is an agile environment that is more easily configured, modified, managed and governed compared to non-SOA systems.
Companies and individuals who have submitted signed Participation Agreements and participate in meetings and contribute work to move the FIMS project forward.

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