Hybrid Software as a Service (SaaS): The New Way to Move Media

Executive Summary

The pace of technological change has accelerated over the past two decades, forever altering the way we share information. From small businesses on Main Street to financial institutions on Wall Street, companies are capitalizing on new modes of computing and software delivery—including software as a service (SaaS) and hybrid SaaS—that let them achieve a new level of results with less technology investment.

In the field of media production, media and entertainment organizations have yet to fully realize the benefits of SaaS when it comes to a key element of their day-to-day operations: moving the extremely large video and audio files that are the lifeblood of their business. Whether wary of trusting the cloud environment utilized by SaaS or apprehensive about the resources required to make a change, many media organizations continue to rely on outmoded technologies—or inadequate online services—that aren't doing the file transfer job as efficiently as they could.

Opportunities remain, however, for media production professionals and teams to seamlessly implement hybrid SaaS solutions into their operations, and enjoy the benefits of this "best of both worlds" approach: fast, easy, secure file transfers that provide users with command over the process and control of their proprietary data.

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What Is SaaS?

To understand what hybrid SaaS means and how it can benefit media production companies, we must start by understanding what SaaS is—and how it has changed the way people and companies use technology.

Up until recent history, in order to run a business and achieve faster and more efficient results electronically, an enterprise had to procure (or develop in-house) and pay for all the software, servers, storage and networks necessary to get the job done—and hire all the human resources needed to run them full-time. As a result, organizations would invest ample capital and ramp up IT resources only to realize that their needs had changed or a superior product had been developed to meet their needs.

SaaS, essentially cloud computing at its most basic level, has changed all of that. With SaaS, a service provider—think Google and its Google Docs product—takes care of developing and hosting applications, offering them to users through a web browser. These applications—and all data accumulated from users—sit in the service provider's hosting environment.

From the user perspective, the benefits of SaaS are many, particularly for individuals and small enterprises seeking the power of advanced applications without significant capital and resources investment. All SaaS services are provided through the cloud, managed from a simple web browser, without installation or maintenance fees. SaaS applications are usually free to use, or come with a low subscription cost for more advanced features. Users then enjoy the benefits of real-time updates and new features developed at someone else's expense. SaaS is like a massive lending library in the cloud, where users can take advantage of the latest bestsellers and subscriptions, which are constantly updated at no cost to them.

Although SaaS has existed in some form since networked computing began in the last century, its use has increased exponentially over the past few years as cloud computing has been on the rise. According to the technology research firm Gartner, the global SaaS market is expected to grow to more than $21 billion by 2015, with a compound annual growth rate of over 15 percent—a rate five times faster than the traditional, on-premise software market. The bottom line: this approach to software delivery isn't going away anytime soon.

However, SaaS applications do come with a downside. With SaaS applications, users do not have full control over the applications or the data. And the very aspect of SaaS that makes it appealing—the fact that someone else handles the development, hosting and maintenance of applications and you can collaborate with others cheaply from any location—is a double-edged sword that presents security concerns. Once you upload to these applications, your data remains out there in their cloud environment and you forfeit control of your intellectual property to an infrastructure shared by other customers.

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Hybrid SaaS: On-Premise Security, Cloud Benefits

The introduction of hybrid SaaS to the marketplace has mitigated these security concerns, without sacrificing the benefits of development and consumerized user interfaces in the cloud. Overall this has increased the appeal of SaaS to organizations wishing to benefit from the technology's flexibility but wanting to remain in control of their data.

Hybrid SaaS products are, as the name suggests, a hybrid between a SaaS solution and an on-premise software application. The functional piece of the software is typically delivered in the cloud, hosted by the software provider. So when you log in to the application from a web browser, you're accessing an outside hosting environment that houses the user interface, functionality, and in the case of file sharing hybrid SaaS solutions, the mechanism that moves your files back and forth.

However, unlike traditional SaaS solutions, hybrid SaaS products enable users' data to be stored in the environment of their choosing until it is encrypted and sent over the Internet. The "agent" that stores the data sits either on an on-premise server managed by the user's organization, or if it is preferable, in the cloud. It's entirely up to the user to decide where to keep the storage, and the content never actually passes into the cloud unless there's a deliberate decision to store it there. As a result, the security concerns of the SaaS model are eliminated as the two key elements of the model—the control functions of the application and the storage of the customer's data—are operated independently of one another. Users enjoy the benefits of cloud software without sacrificing control of their data.
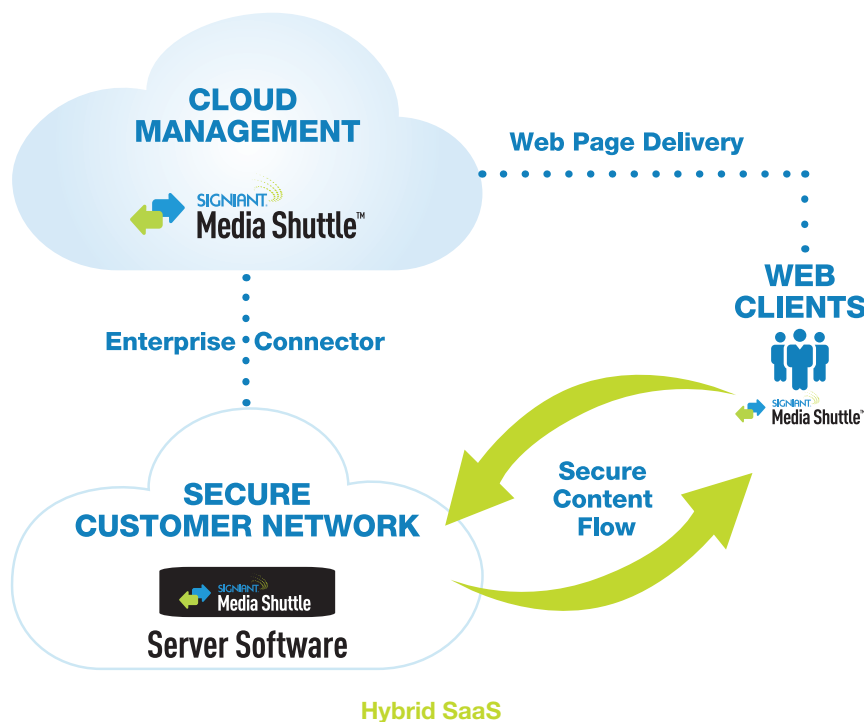
Hybrid SaaS

Within an enterprise, hybrid SaaS solutions for file transfers meet the unique needs of three types of users:

- End users who need a simple, fast, corporate-approved method of sharing large files and may be frustrated by the limitations of FTP and other transfer methods.

- IT administrators who need the cost and scalability of cloud solutions while assuring information security and providing flexible file access through projects' lifecycles.

- Project managers who need to easily provide and remove access to files by employees, contractors, business partners and customers, and can benefit from visibility into which users have shared which files. With hybrid SaaS, they can monitor projects, ensure data security and know when they need to ask IT for more file storage capacity.

Moving Media with Hybrid SaaS

Perhaps nowhere are the benefits of hybrid SaaS more crucial than in the fields of digital content creation, media and entertainment. Currently, the perfect storm exists throughout many media and entertainment organizations: media operations professionals are under tremendous pressure to respond to tight deadlines and move incredibly large, high-value media files seamlessly—but they are often required to use 40-year-old technology, the only option provided by their IT department. In fact, FTP servers remain an industry standard among media organizations for the transfer of these files, despite their technical limitations, user unfriendliness, and lack of benefits such as the ability to track user activity and downloads.

As a result, to get the job done many media operations and production professionals report that they turn to other, "on the fly" solutions. For particularly large files or transfers to business partners outside their organization, they often physically ship the files on hardware (tapes or hard drives)—a reliable but highly inconvenient solution. And many media and entertainment professionals report turning to online file sharing services, such as YouSendIt, Citrix ShareFile and Dropbox. Though this approach does frequently work more efficiently than FTP transfers to deliver files, users acknowledge that it is a band-aid solution with its own set of headaches including file size limitations and security concerns. Once uploaded to these pure SaaS solutions, media files are stored in the software companies' cloud and no longer remain within the full control of content owners. In the field of media and entertainment, where files represent hundreds, if not thousands, of hours of creative work—and loss or exploitation of the files could mean significant damage—this is a risk that is simply not worth taking.

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A hybrid SaaS solution such as Media Shuttle by Signiant allows media production professionals to share and transfer files seamlessly and efficiently, without giving up the control and security that are imperatives for their business and industry. With hybrid SaaS, media professionals can keep their content where they believe it will be most secure—most often on their own server. Yet by taking advantage of cloud software benefits, Media Shuttle provides the kind of custom, easy-to-navigate experience users have come to expect from consumer file sharing products, with the added control and scalability they need within their media enterprise—without IT headaches or the cost of updating software.
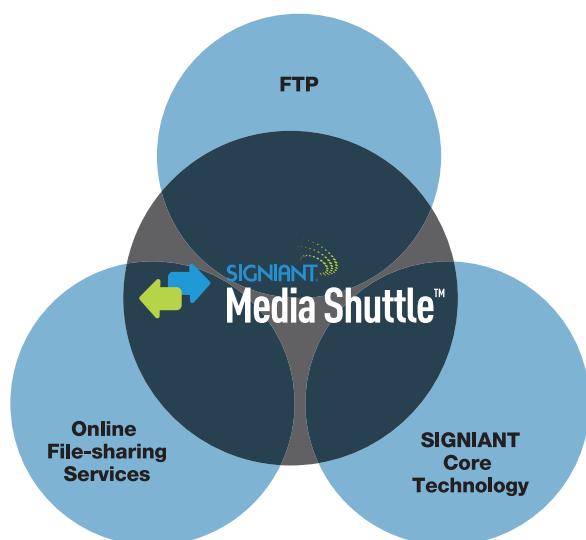

Media Shuttle combines the security of FTP solutions with the simplicity of online file sharing services and the power of our proven technology platform to deliver the fastest, most reliable way to share any size file, anywhere, fast.

User-Friendly Experience

Powered by the cloud, Media Shuttle provides end users with an interface so simple and intuitive they will no longer need to turn to alternatives like consumer file sharing websites to transfer high-value media files. With no training needed, users have two options for sharing files using any web browser:

• Simple email delivery—Media Shuttle fully integrates with email and existing file systems (including FTP servers) for seamless file sharing. The interface automatically populates with recipient information, and recipients receive an email with a simple download link to receive the file.

• Custom portals—Project managers can create a fully customized portal (or web pages) with their company's branding. The portal allows for easy drag-and-drop of files within the browser page, the ability to easily push content to others and tracking information that provides at-a-glance insight into who has received which files throughout the course of the project.
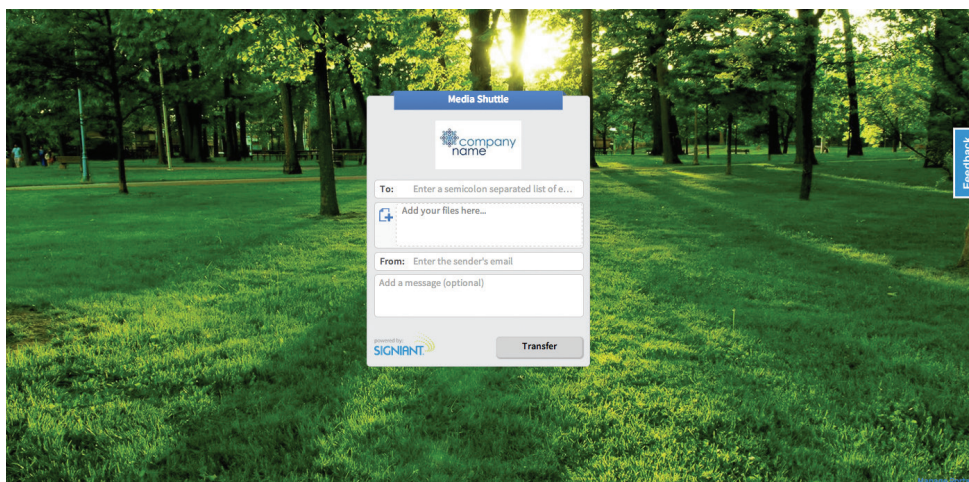
**With Media Shuttle you can quickly and easily extend your brand
by customizing your portal with your style and image.**

Visibility and Control

Media project managers need the ability to monitor ever-changing workflow and the various contributors—and recipients of files—for each project. The Media Shuttle custom portal's dashboard provides a unique view into the data driving each project forward, allowing for project managers to track the number of users, number of transfers and average file size for each transfer. Operations managers know who has moved what, and when, and IT administrators can even set parameters such as the maximum file size, which servers will support each portal and the portal lifespan.
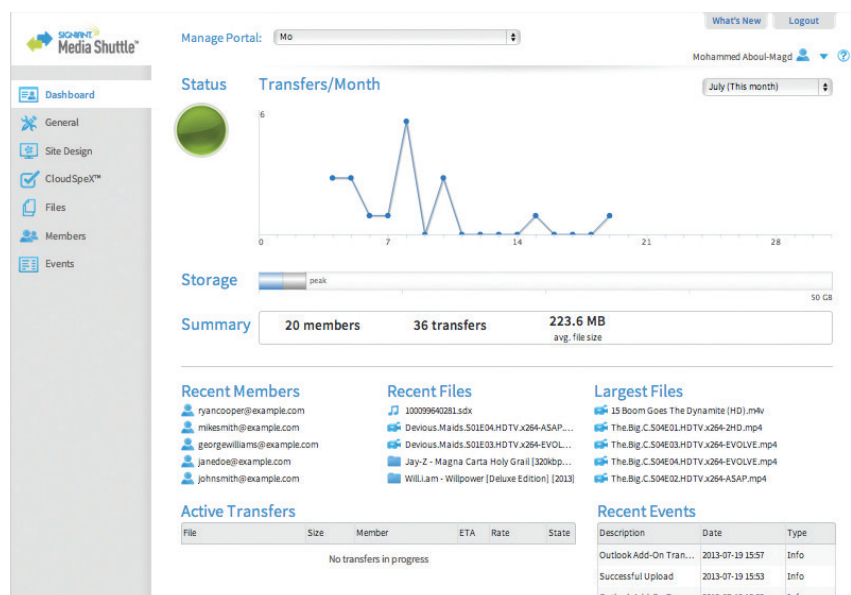
**Administrators can easily manage all file movement
and users with Media Shuttle.**

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By using hybrid SaaS and keeping project data local, everyone involved in media projects, from users to IT administrators, can maintain an unprecedented level of control and insight around the file transfers involved in each project. In addition to supporting project security, this level of data can be tremendously helpful in allowing project managers to improve the architecture of projects involving file sharing by better allocating resources and balancing peaks in demand.

High-Level Security

With hybrid SaaS, security no longer needs to be sacrificed for greater efficiency and speed. Users no longer must resort to makeshift online solutions of questionable security, at the risk of IT's disapproval, and IT has peace of mind knowing their content is stored on their own storage area network or server at all times. With Media Shuttle, data remains on premises, behind the organization's own firewall, until it is ready to transmit. This is powered by one or more Media Shuttle servers, software that receives files or enables high speed downloads, and Media Shuttle's high performance file transfer protocol, which also run on the user's own network. The result is a high-tech, cloud-based transfer solution with the same security profile of the lower-tech options currently in use among so many media organizations.

Efficiency and Speed

Outmoded technologies remain in use due to security factors, but at the expense of efficiency and speed. Hybrid SaaS optimizes all of these concerns, by delivering secure transfer capabilities with all of the power of an advanced application. While other solutions max out at 2 GB, Media Shuttle allows for no file size limit, at a speed up to 200 times faster than FTP due to built-in file acceleration. Media Shuttle's dashboard shows the average file size and average speed of transfer, allowing users to track the high efficiency of their file delivery.

For those organizations concerned with the need to make internal changes to accommodate a new solution, Media Shuttle is fully capable of functioning with an FTP infrastructure. By simply pointing Media Shuttle at existing FTP servers, enterprises continue to benefit from an FTP storage solution while gaining insight into the data behind their projects. Like the tracking information used by shipping companies like FedEx to keep track of packages, Media Shuttle's user interface provides the details—from file name, sender, receiver, time of transfer, rate of speed—that users, project managers and IT departments need to understand how their files are being shared.

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Hybrid SaaS: Reliable Security. New Possibilities.

With the availability of hybrid SaaS, there is no reason media production professionals should have to settle for using outmoded technology or compromise security by using online file sharing sites to send and receive the media files they need for their daily operations. Media Shuttle combines the best features of online file sharing services and traditional file sharing solutions and provides an approach that is consumer-friendly yet powerful enough for the enterprise—and completely secure. With hybrid SaaS, media and entertainment enterprises can achieve the file sharing results they need, with the highest level of security, while gaining critical insight and control over their data and projects.

Try Media Shuttle

Media Shuttle provides easy-to-use, cost-effective, secure and fast file sharing to media and entertainment enterprises. It delivers the scalability, flexibility, redundancy and low cost of SaaS solutions with the security and control the enterprise demands. If your media organization is frustrated with slow FTP software, waiting for thumb drives to arrive or the security challenges of makeshift solutions, unleash the benefits of hybrid SaaS today by trying Media Shuttle. **http://www.mediashuttle.com**

ABOUT SIGNIANT

Used by the world's top content creators and distributors, Signiant is the market leader in intelligent file movement software for the media and entertainment industry. The company's powerful software suite optimizes existing enterprise network infrastructure and media technologies to ensure secure digital media exchanges, workflow efficiency and superior user experiences.

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