Hit Play: Calgary's Worldplay Find Its Niche in Video

Jeff Brown (/contributors/jeff-brown) | January 7, 2019



Takeaway: *Worldplay discovered a gap in video distribution then filled it with an online and mobile video platform that is both easy-to-use and affordable.*

Somewhere between YouTube and Brightcove, a world of video marketing opportunity awaits. One Calgary company says its all-in-one platform can take you there.

Some impressive biteable.com statistics (https://biteable.com/blog/tips/video-marketing-statistics/) suggest it's a nice place to be. Marketing videos make consumers twice as likely to buy a product or service. Nearly half of all Internet users buy based on video content. Over 80 per cent of viewers believe videos are helpful. That same percentage can recall a video ad 30 days after they've viewed it, which might be why brands that use video marketing grow their annual revenue 49

per cent faster than those who don't.

"Organizations intuitively began to realize their need to use video," says Terry Mochar, CEO and director of Calgary tech company Worldplay (https://www.worldplaynetworks.com/). He says reading is out for training employees, building communities and sharing ideas. Video's in – if you have the right tools to distribute, control and monetize your content.

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So Worldplay developed Vidflex, a proprietary video platform that delivers those tools. Even better, Mochar and crew found a way to make it affordable.



Terry Mochar, CEO, Director, Worldplay

Traditionally, video marketers have been obliged to either embed their video content on an open-source website like WordPress or upload it to a video platform. Using public platforms like YouTube was like cramming your content into a crowded

subway car, but it could ride in style on big enterprise platforms like Brightcove or Ooyala – if you could pay the Rolls Royce prices.

The middle ground between those two platform levels was virtually untouched, and Mochar saw Worldplay's opportunity. It was unknown territory, but the company's talented staff had earned a reputation for making things work.

"Worldplay's DNA has always been about video," Mochar explains. The company had already developed technology for a 3D visor and patented a video compression system. But that was before Mochar came on board.

Video as an Emerging Priority

At that time, Mochar was still in Europe, where he had served as director of global business development for a multi-billion-dollar FTSE 100 company in the United Kingdom. Mochar oversaw a period of impressive growth in global trade investment, company revenues, operating profits and share price. He co-authored several publications on worldwide commerce and served on the executive board of the Global Commerce Initiative in Brussels, as well as several corporate boards around the world.

Mochar shared his time in Brussels with 50 of the world's top CEOs representing organizations like Walmart, Coca-Cola and Procter & Gamble. Tasked with finding ways to make the global supply chain more efficient, the board identified 17 top priorities to tackle. Mobile commerce ranked second.

"This was back even before the iPhone came out," he says. "We knew we were spending about two billion British pounds a year on media and recognizing that the time was quickly coming when you would need to reach consumers on mobile devices using video."

In 2010, Mochar retired from full-time corporate life, focusing on international funding and philanthropic projects. He was still living in the U.K. but kept in touch with contacts back in Canada. Through them, he heard about Worldplay's video

compression technology and connected with the company. By the time he returned to Canada, the compression tech was old news, but Worldplay thought Mochar's business acumen would be just what they needed for their next significant innovation.

A Massive Shift - and a Big Opportunity

Innovation, incidentally, is one of Worldplay's four stated core values. The company "looks to problem solve and brings a 'what if' attitude to every meeting and challenge." Mochar recognized that spirit – plus tremendous talent – in the Worldplay team, and he had the perfect project for them to sink their teeth into. It had been seeded in his mind during his time in Brussels, and it developed as he watched the evolution of video marketing rapidly unfold.

"There was a massive shift taking place in the marketplace as to how people were communicating through video," Mochar recalls. Companies who couldn't afford enterprise platforms saw the branding, voice and message of their content overshadowed by that of the host site. The cost of 'free' video posting was having your content delayed and abruptly cut off by intrusive ads – or lost in the swarm of videos competing for attention. Managing your own video content could be a complex and discouraging task for digital neophytes. So could trying to monetize it or even track its success.

"So there was this huge emerging opportunity – a large, underserved part of the market that needed more video technology. Leaping from YouTube to a big enterprise platform was just too expensive, complicated and out of reach for the world's average organizations."

Plenty of Room to Jump In ...

"The need for a self-managed white-label video platform in the market was really unmet," Mochar says. The term "white label" signifies no pre-existing branding to compete with the client's. "That's where Worldplay steps in." And their competitors

had left them a broad, open spot to do it.

Years ago, Mochar explains, big enterprise platforms became invested in a high-paying target market – much as the original website architects had before people could start their own websites for $9 a month. Now that same shift is coming to video platforms, but the big enterprise outfits are clinging to their high-rolling business model. While they won't come down, the YouTubes won't move up because they're doing very well on their ad revenues.

"So this big delta sits in the middle," Mochar says, "and that's where Worldplay jumped in and basically leveled the playing field for any organization in the world to be able to compete using video."

Mochar estimates the company mapped a "tangible, addressable market" of approximately 4.2 million organizations across 17 sectors whose needs could be met by Worldplay's technology. That group was then refined to those organizations most likely to become early adopters – those who are fully video-ready, have some video content to share or at least have recognized the need for video.

Worldplay took a "human-centred approach," according to Mochar, moulding the technology around the client and not vice-versa. It needed and asked for the perspectives of several North American organizations trying to compete in the digital age – what they needed their content to do and what options made sense to them. Their feedback was synthesized down to its most common themes, clarifying the picture of what the new platform should be.

The Vision of Vidflex

Worldplay's best prospects were those who could tell meaningful, impactful stories – engaging audiences, strengthening customer relationships and building online communities. Mochar calls video the "de facto tool" for communicating, educating and sharing ideas.

"Video capture technology has improved so dramatically that now anyone, anywhere can create and distribute effective video to meet this demand," he says. More content meant more opportunity but also more work to do.

Companies would need a professional website with a video content management system (VCMS) hub big enough and with enough security to store, organize, manage, stream, share and even monetize all their content – an all-in-one platform they could control and use to showcase their brand. They required detailed, comprehensive reporting and analytics to track viewership and engagement. Multiple levels of site administration and access were required for teams of people controlling content, feedback, comments and customer interactions. And all of it had to be simple to use.

"That's exactly why Vidflex was built," Mochar says. "Our platform was developed to remove as many technical roadblocks as possible."

"Worldplay spent the first few years testing the market need hypothesis by working with a variety of organizations from small local, mid-size nationals to large internationals to test and try our platform," Mochar explains. We gave ourselves room to fail fast, learn quickly and adjust our technology to ensure we were delivering what the market would need – for both the present and the future."

The Grand Unveiling

In September 2018, Worldplay unveiled what Mochar calls "an agile, lightweight, white label video platform that is self-managed right out of the box."

The name "Vidflex" combines "vid" (video) with "flex," which suggest both flexibility and the strength of the system's back end or "engine."

"Few organizations provide the tools and feature set in combination with a content management system within the pricing structure that we offer," Mochar says. Clients pay an affordable monthly license and usage fee on the software as a service model, making the hard-working employees and faithful shareholders happy. The users have reason to be happy, too.

In just a few keystrokes, they can create their own YouTube, Netflix, or Lynda.com – all while leveraging their brand (uploaded logos, animations, etc.). Clients can do what they wish with their content - create online learning libraries, broadcast global events, create monthly membership subscription services and customize as many channels as they like.

Vidflex enables clients to tailor the viewer experience and flow via playlists, seasons, series, episodes and content organization features like dynamic video sliders to categorize videos by popularity, most recent, etc. Those who opt to sell advertising on their site can control its appearance. They can communicate differently with specific target groups (consumers, customers, internal staff), set up e-commerce options, analyze video performance, and assign separate administrators to take charge of any number of channels – all in a single platform.

Clients, the Cloud and Control

That convenience has attracted a raft of customers, including the Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference (ACAC), Hockey Canada, the Canadian Junior Football league, Pro Rodeo Canada, niche video content creators, some faith-based organizations, and businesses like Fresnel Software and Blackbaud.

"We built Vidflex to allow more people to create, manage and distribute live or VOD content," Mochar says. The content includes live events, which organizations can

publish instantly via an ad-hoc stream. They can make the livestream available to anyone or restricted groups. They can even create a pay-per-view system with just a couple of clicks.

Mochar couldn't deliver that massive amount of data without a cloud-based infrastructure.

"Delivering video requires a very complex and reliable network and hosting environment," he says. "Today, our customer base is throughout North America, and they deliver to viewers around the world." Not only has that made Worldplay's product more accessible, reliable, cost-effective and feature-rich, but it's also enabled the company to scale its delivery capacity as it gains business. That includes programming options, security, and personal service that keeps pace with customer needs.

Not Their First Rodeo

Teamwork is another of Worldplay's stated values. It's essential because the trail to client satisfaction begins with an innovation team, followed by three development teams, the creative design team and a production/marketing team. Clients requiring full or partial footage can prevail upon Worldplay's video studio department.

"We first hire for culture fit and second for skill," Mochar explains. "We want a culture of innovation, collaboration, productivity, high trust and low ego. It has to be about the product, brand and market opportunity."

Worldplay's quest for the best design and engineering talent available has resulted in a diverse team, hailing from Europe, Eastern Europe, Asia Pacific and North America. Worldplay's Board of Directors and Advisory Board are also populated by high-calibre professionals, drawn by the company's innovation and business model.

"These individuals are thought leaders and influencers in their various fields of expertise who have wanted to be part of what Worldplay is doing in the market," Mochar says.

Their experience and talent shone through when the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) tapped the team just two weeks before the National Finals Rodeo.

"The US is a key market for Worldplay, both for sports and for enterprise customer growth," Mochar explains. American audiences love rodeo and getting tons of video from VCMS platforms. Saying "no" was not an option.

So the team cowboyed up, working with the PRCA on a digital strategy to promote the livestreaming of the NFR. They did this while developing, releasing and streaming the entire 10-day event on Vidflex . Granted the rights via CBS Sports to broadcast in five countries, Vidflex expanded the NFR's livestreaming footprint.

Taking Stock

Achievement is another of Worldplay's stated values, but that doesn't mean it's time to relax.

"Creating our own platform will allow Worldplay to help invent the future of what we think video technology will look like," Mochar says. He's eager to keep after it.

"Most of our customers are headquartered in Canada and the US.," Mochar explains. "The reach of our platform extends globally. For example, Hockey Canada is a national brand that attracts video viewing fans from all around the world ... that's what makes it exciting – we are helping businesses and organizations build communities and engage their audiences worldwide."