

## Interview with Jason Perr – CEO, Consultant and Engineer at Intuitive Asset Management

Dave: Welcome to the Elegant Workflow Podcast - A member of the Tech Podcast Network. Today we are speaking with Jason Perr – CEO, Consultant and Engineer at Intuitive Asset Management. Jason, welcome back to the Podcast.

Jason: Thanks for having me.

Dave: What have you been working on lately in the realm of asset management?

Jason: I was working for Levels Beyond for a couple of years. I left them about a year ago and came back to focus 100% on my own consulting company, Intuitive Asset Management. Within Intuitive, we partnered actually with a number of reseller partners. We have a couple of reseller partners in Los Angeles, a couple in New York and even one in UK. What we're really focused on doing is providing high level consulting around visual asset management workflows all the way down to actually building and customizing specific workflows for unique different clients around the world actually at this point through our integration partners. We've been doing a lot of fun stuff with building out new integrations with Reach Engine, one primary digital asset management platforms that we've been working with for a while now as well as some other platforms out there too and doing a lot of fun things with all sorts of different external applications and integrating them into the digital asset management and workflow automation and delivery kind of stack of applications that we've been working with these days.

Dave: Many people these days are building workflows based on Adobe Creative Cloud and can you describe some of the best practices you're seeing around that and how maybe using components of it like Prelude for metadata tagging?

Jason: With Reach Engine especially we've been doing a tremendous amount of good development and deployment of Adobe Creative Cloud applications with some great automation to it. Like you're mentioning, the Adobe Prelude has really opened the door on the logging side of things to provide a tool that is a really powerful tool that a lot of people already own because a lot of people already own Creative Cloud so they might have never used it before but usually there's not actually a purchase decision to be made. It's more of just another tool in the toolset. When we show people what you can do with Prelude, what it really comes down to is number one, getting the users out of the mindset of having to worry about of where a file is stored or where it's going to be stored. When you ingest content into Adobe Prelude, you are able to just do a file import bring it in directly off of a card or directly off of a hard drive. You'll be able to view it in Adobe Prelude. You'll be able to make minor touch-ups as far as in points and outpoints. And then what's really powerful is when you have third party companies like Levels Beyond that actually deploy panels inside of the Prelude application and it's something that Adobe's done that's very unique in this space where someone of an external company can create this kind of panel. Inside these panels, Reach Engine has two of them for example. The first one is a logging panel. You can actually see all of your digital asset management fields with dropdowns, checkboxes, you know, multi-list dropdowns versus single list dropdowns. All the variables and variety of metadata that you would have in their full application, you can now see it directly inside of Adobe Prelude. And then you can use Prelude to do all of your logging either singular clips by just selecting one clip or multiple clips or just doing a select all and tag hundreds of clips all at once with your specific asset management tags. And then to take it a step further, you can actually do this off-site completely disconnected from the asset management system now. What happens is as long as you're onsite at some point to sync up with your local Reach Engine, you

can capture all of your field data to your local system or laptop then you can take it out into the field with you for your shoot. And as new camera cards are coming in or new hard drives are coming in, you attach them to the laptop; you can log all of your metadata into your specific fields for your workflow. And then when you get back to your facility or if you want to send your files through some kind of high speed transfer mechanism, you ingest those into Reach Engine and all that metadata comes in and goes directly into your Reach Engine metadata fields; so really powerful stuff. And then in addition to the metadata side, when you're back onsite with your asset management system in the primary location, there's a second panel to actually do the ingest for you. You can actually log everything inside Prelude. Open up a second panel inside Prelude and click ingest and Reach Engine will automatically handle where all those files need to go transporting those files to your SAN, automatically handling things like backup or any other processes you might have built into those workflows. All with the editor never having to look at a file system or care or know about where things need to go, just happens for them so really powerful stuff.

Dave: Yeah that is really powerful stuff because I know one of the biggest problems that really happens around asset management is getting that data from the field into the final asset management system and it's usually on a piece of paper, script supervisor notes or some type of onset notes. There's so many chances for error. Oftentimes like you said the editors are under the gun, the assistant editors are under the gun. Nobody has time to put this in so they dump it into the system. They say they'll figure it out later and then you have this great asset management system with no metadata and later nobody can find anything. I love how you can log all this stuff offline, bring it in and then marry it together with the final footage.

Jason: Exactly. It's really powerful.

Dave: You're shooting these camera cards and it's so easy to mistakenly erase this footage. Sometimes, thousands if not hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of valuable material, what are you seeing around that to kind of keep the security of that footage so that the people don't have to worry about losing footage in any of these processes.

Jason: There's a couple different pieces there. The first one that we've done a lot of work around pretty recently for the past, I'd say 4 or 5 clients that we've been deploying Reach Engine for is really just modifying the ingest workflow so that the ingest is not just ingesting content but also taking care of an initial backup of the content. When I talk about backup versus archive, what I'm normally meaning is not a full system wide backup but just the idea of on ingest, we're going to take a copy of that high res source file and send it directly off to LTO while still maintaining the high res online for editorial. That way in the future when it is ready to be archived, the archive step can be one of two things. Either we just check to see that a backup exists, verify that there's two copies and then delete the file and save it its now archived because we know the backup's there or take it a step further and we can actually even restore the file from LTO. Verify it against the file that you have online and then delete the file that's online. Either way the key thing is that with this concept of doing a backup on ingest, we're always making sure that your data is secure from the second that it hits the asset management system all the way through instead of having to wait until you get to a point of archive. Another neat thing that we're doing with that though is because we ran into an issue where some people say well it takes awhile for that process to happen. If I'm ingesting a hundred or so clips, I don't want to have to wait for each one of them to go through their backup process before they're fully done ingesting and able to be used. What we've done there is we've taken that same concept of backup on ingest and made it slightly different that when you ingest everything comes into the

system and basically there's a flag of whether something has been backed up or not. And so when it first comes in that flag is false and then at the end of the day around 1 or 2 in the morning usually, there's a workflow that will search and find everything in the system that's not currently backed up and automatically back up all that content in the middle of the night. So the next day when people come into start working, everything's ready to go; everything's already backed up.

Dave: You're right. A lot of people once again just want to get the content in there, get it going. They don't really worry about backups or archives. They figure they'll deal with it later and oftentimes it just never gets dealt with. In this way, you build it into the process. You're not really holding anybody up because they could still work the materials are being ingested. And then at a convenient time like you said the middle of the night, the system will just go off check the flags and do whatever it needs to do.

Jason: Exactly. It makes a big difference getting it out of the way for the editors so that they can literally ingest and start working right away and not have to worry about it but at the end of the day, we know that everything is safe and on those LTO tapes and not just sitting on our spinning desks.

Dave: What are you seeing around the latest techniques for handling metadata so it's being transferred into the editing applications because that's a weakness I've seen a lot of with various asset management systems where the data's in there but it comes down to exporting a clip, dropping it into an editor and then pretty much, there may be some time code passed along on a clip name but a lot of the data that's in there especially if you're doing this Prelude workflow just gets lost. So what kind of best practices have you've developed around that?

Jason: This is another one where I think Adobe stepped up pretty well in the editorial side of things. And that the way Adobe Premier is setup, instead of just looking at metadata from a project file, it's always looking at all the metadata that's embedded into a file itself or at least it can be configured that way. Now of course that only matters if you have metadata in the files and traditionally speaking, pretty much all asset management systems don't do that. The way most asset management systems work is they're storing all that metadata in their own database. When you search in the asset manager, you are searching the database, not searching metadata on a bunch of files. The way we came up with a solution for this was creating a workflow that is an embed metadata workflow that will basically take all the metadata that you give it which is normally the metadata provided inside of Reach Engine and embedding that into fields that can be custom fields, that can be whatever you want that are actually in the file itself. So this embed metadata workflow once you run this on an asset, when you open that file up in any kind of application that's able to see embedded metadata which includes Adobe Premier, now you can see that metadata directly in your actual bin inside of Premier. You can search for it. You can take actions against it. You can do all the things you'd expect to do in an editing system where you can actually see this metadata. Then the second piece of this is we found well, the utilities that we have to use to be able to embed metadata could take some time to be able to process depending on the size of the file. So we've made it so that again, there's a couple of options of how it's going to be run. You can select the file and just run the embed metadata or we can tack it on to the ingest so after you tag all your metadata in Adobe Prelude and hit ingest. Not only will it copy that metadata into Reach Engine but it will also embed it into the file or the last step is we have it so that every night at 1:00 AM again will run this embed metadata workflow that will search for any new assets or any assets that haven't been embedded yet and automatically embed all the metadata that's available for them. So, a number

of different ways to be able to run this workflow but the end result is the same which is just that all your metadata from your asset manager gets into the file so now it's viewable and actionable in other applications.

Dave: Yeah that really does simplify things quite a bit. Are you finding there are any techniques within the Avid family that you're using as far as getting this information like for example into Interplay or is the Adobe family a little bit easier to work at this point around this type of metadata workflow?

Jason: The Adobe family is tremendously easier to work with at this point. Unfortunately in the world of Avid, the idea of APIs is, and the idea of being open as much as they might talk about it on stages really still does not exist. I've personally tried for about a year and half to get access to APIs that I've heard people talk about on stages and they simply don't exist or they simply are not willing to let anyone to have them. Being able to get metadata into Avid these days, the closest thing that I've been able to ever come up with is exporting metadata out to an ALE type of file and then on the Avid side having to manually do an import of that metadata. When we talk about Interplay, you have Interplay production which is very different from Interplay Central but it's kind of a piece of it. It actually communicates with DNLEs. An Interplay production does have some APIs to be able to send files in with metadata but it's very, very limited. It's very specific just to kind of fields that you can create within that system and really you end up having to pay for two asset management systems to do something that you can do with just one with any other NLE. It's still a very painful process in the Avid world and unfortunately for Avid that is one of the big reasons that we see a lot of people leaving Avid and coming over to Adobe is the pure fact of seeing all the innovations being done on the Adobe side, all the partners that are able to integrate with it and all the new things that are happening. It's very attractive for people who have been stuck kind of in the walled garden as people say of the Avid world.

Dave: The Adobe suite is just so powerful and it's such a really amazing thing financially too because what you get for the subscription package is everything so you want to do audio work, you want to do effects work, I mean everything's in there down to Photoshop. I think it's just such a really great value. These days captioning is just so important to workflows so what are you seeing around captioning? What are you able to do with these asset management systems and workflows to simplify captioning because it's pretty much required for everything now?

Jason: And I think it all comes down to automating the pieces that makes sense to automate these days and knowing how to work with a number of different systems in a cohesive manner and again that's where Reach Engine and workflow automation come into place, being able to kind of be the central hub of this process to be able to utilize these different tools and different pieces along the way. We did a workflow recently for a major NFL team that basically at the end of the day came down to you select the final video that's ready to go out. You press one button that's going to basically take a proxy of that video and it's going to send a time code specific proxy of that video out to an external captioning company. That external captioning company receives the file. They have their people do their actual captioning and they create an SEC caption file. That caption file then comes back to Reach Engine. They send it normally over FTP or Aspera or Signium. Once Reach Engine receives it, it gets ingested and then put into a collection which is basically a container so now inside Reach Engine you have something like a folder that contains your source file and the caption SEC file. And from there, users are now able to execute complete deliveries with a single click so they select that collection that contains the 2 files then say deliver it to this TV station or these 5 TV stations or all these different outputs. And what happens is Reach Engine then communicates to Telstream Vantage, passes

it the source file as well as the caption file and then Vantage utilizes an integration that they have since they purchased Mac Caption a little while ago where they actually do the embedding of the caption file into the final result as its being transcoded into the destination format. SO what happens is you have one transcode that's being done anyway to create your final destination format and then within that transcode the captions are getting embedded into the file and then it also then goes directly into the delivery process through again an FTP or a Signium or Aspera or other file transfer mechanism and then email notification kind of things upon delivery. So what used to be extremely complicated essentially comes down to one click to send it to the caption company, one click to send it out to all the rest of the world.

Dave: And that is huge. I remember I built a workflow a few years ago to do this for a web based distribution and we basically had a guy sitting there full time everyday with Mac caption doing all these files by hand. We came up with some scripting to help him but it's really amazing to see all this automation and all this simplification.

Jason: That's definitely come a long way and making it more and more automated is always the goal. The one thing everyone's always still dreaming of is when we can use some of these phonetic indexing applications to automatically generate the caption files but I think we're still a little ways off on that one.

Dave: It's kind of like talking to Siri. It gets it, I don't know 60% of the time something that's usable, same thing with these programs. It's amazing what they can do but there's so many different speakers. It's very hard with all the different actors and there may be music, sound effects and even if you have a clean dialogue track it's still really hard on those programs. So what do you see for the future of DAM automation and integration especially with editing software since we're talking about a lot of what's possible today. What do you think would be possible in the future?

Jason: Well I think what it comes down to at least for what I hope, is just more and more direct communication, faster and easier ways to be able to pass metadata back and forth between NLEs and the asset management systems. Being able to create more and more of this kind of transparent communication and mechanism to help users just always have the latest information on all their assets at their fingertips and a very quick and easy way to access the automation of their asset management systems from all the other external systems just like we're talking about in Prelude, how we can ingest content and press a button in Prelude to trigger the ingest into Reach. I'm hoping we're going to see more and more of that kind of integration capabilities come up. And then the other big thing really is better integration with things like the external transcoders directly from the NLEs so that everything can kind of speak on this singular platform. You know, again this is something that Adobe's done a bit with the Adobe Anywhere software and kind of project they've been doing there which I still think is still new. It's still kind of working out its kinks and kind of finding its place in the market. In a lot of ways I think it's still not ready for a lot of clients but for some clients that happen to have the right kind of formats and the right kind of environment, they're doing some amazing things there so I think it's kind of a hint of things to come. I hope that all the different NLE players continue to push forward in that side and I think the asset management is there to really come in, in the back end and you know really provide all the extra services and be that glue to all the other things that you want to do with your assets.

Dave: What would you like to see the industry vendors doing differently to support more efficient workflows?

Jason: You know again it's all about being more and more open, building better more extensive APIs, providing good, strong support for those APIs and just being able to give us the keys really. I think for a long time the NLE companies especially we're very close and very much didn't want to let anyone in and felt there was this kind of their secret sauce of what they were doing to the files. I think we're starting to see that, even in the Final Cut where I've seen a lot of more openness recently than we ever had in the past but I think being able to get more access into those systems and being able to do more with those APIs and have better documentation and better examples. It's going to be the thing that makes a big difference and making all these processes more efficient or collaborative and just better for everyone overall.

Dave: Yeah I agree with you. I think the key is just everybody being more open. I think people are going to go to the platforms that they like to work with. You may be an Adobe person, you're going to want to work with Premier. You may be an Avid person, you're going to want to work with Media Composer but if everything is open in the back end then you can choose what's best for you and have the same capabilities regardless of what you're working with in the front end. Hopefully, we create a bigger pie for everyone rather than like you said everything being so dark and all these dark data. It's nice to see that companies have been moving away from that.

Jason: I totally agree. I think hopefully we just keep seeing more and more openness coming out of these systems.