

EBU – AMWA
FIMS Task Force



FIMS Framework for Interoperability on Media Services

Terms of Reference

(December 4, 2009)

Introduction

While the market is moving away from traditional video centric technologies in favour of IT based ones, the design and management of enterprise level production systems is still a challenge for most broadcasters. A main obstacle has been identified in the lack of standard interfaces between components and systems that forces system integrators to devote consistent resources in the development of custom adapters to integrate components from different vendors. This in turn generates scalability and maintenance problems as the substitution or upgrade of one component can require further adaptation expenses.

The EBU, through the P/NP group, is evaluating the use of Service Oriented Architecture (SOA), a system design pattern that is ,believed to offer the potential for greatly improved interoperability over the current system design practices based on proprietary interfaces. AMWA has set up a Media Services Architecture Group (MSAG) with a similar mandate.

Therefore, as both EBU and AMWA have similar activities and intents, the two organizations have agreed to engage in joint efforts in order to gather a broader consensus between users and manufacturers and to join knowledge and resources to better fulfil the assignments.

What are the tasks?

Given the complexity of the subject and the high number of technologies that can be potentially relevant, the joint group will issue an open Request for Technologies (RFT).

The assigned tasks are:

1. Agree on a common glossary that defines all relevant concepts
A glossary of the most relevant and specific terms will be compiled in order to avoid misunderstandings in the description of requirements and solutions. This step is needed given the interdisciplinary nature of the subject.
2. Draft a Request For Technologies (RFT) on interoperability of IT production systems and components

The group will define the scope of the technologies sought, including application context and type of technology (e.g., service description format, service interface language, model of interoperable services in the reference environment) and gather the relevant requirements. As part of this process, scoping the scale and type of responses required will also be important. Then the RFT will be drafted and published.

3. Define a list of criteria for RFT response evaluation

Objective eligibility criteria must be identified to allow a fair and neutral evaluation of the proposals. This is a critical task.

4. Collect and evaluate RFT responses

This task might be complex as proposals could be based on proprietary technologies. It is likely that the group would face the challenge of bringing proponents together seeking more harmonisation for interoperability.

5. To agree on further actions towards standardization

Depending on the results of the RFT evaluation, further actions will be planned to foster the standardization of the relevant technologies by the proper Standards Bodies. Dissemination actions will also be promoted to share the knowledge between users and manufacturers.

How is the work carried out?

It is agreed that work should progress as much as possible by e-mail and webex. However, it is unavoidable that physical meetings will be required at the time of evaluating responses to the RFT and most likely meetings with the authors of the submissions will also be required for more interactive explanations and discussions.

It is expected that both EBU and AMWA will equally contribute to the success of the work. AMWA has a clearly defined policy regarding intellectual property (upfront declaration, no licensing or similar fees, etc.) similar to what EBU suggests in standardisation groups. The AMWA IP framework will need to be shown to the EBU lawyers.

Given the AMWA's stringent IPR requirements it is vital that all technical contributions are made to both the EBU and the AMWA at the same time. This assures that we do not suffer IPR "leakage" because contributions are made without complying with the either organizations' policy.

All parties willing to contribute are invited to participate in the definition of requirements for the scope and technologies covered by the RFT.

The RFT will be edited by an independent party (the EBU was proposed based on experience in similar cross-industry platforms).

Comments on the RFT will be sought from all interested parties until the EBU-AMWA TF chairs proclaim the editing phase closed.

All contributions to the RFT shall be made simultaneously to AMWA and EBU under the AMWA IPR policy.

Submitters shall not be involved in the review of the proposals.

Results will be co-published by EBU and AMWA.

Liason activities

The Chairs of each organization will be responsible for the dissemination of status and other information within their respective organization.

What is the value to EBU members?

The introduction of IT based production models is considered a strategic move to fulfil the market demand for new integrated content distribution services. Interoperability of systems and components is deeply needed to guarantee the required flexibility in the design, configuration and upgrade of the production infrastructure and to keep its associated TCO as low as possible.

What is the value to AMWA members?

AMWA is an organization made up of both manufacturers and users. Manufacturer members are interested in reducing their costs and risks associated with integration. User members are interested in faster time of integration, with lower cost and risk. The adoption of standard interfaces at the business level, as SOA promotes, would allow for these goals to be achieved.

What are risks if the activity is not done?

The risks are that market solutions are not converging spontaneously towards interoperable models. This could lead to higher costs and low efficiency in the deployment of the new IT technologies in the broadcast environment. It could also lead to a loss of competitive advantage as users are unable to implement more flexible workflow designs which are required to meet the requirements of an ever-changing business environment.

Membership

It is suggested to form two distinct groups of experts: technical experts, with specific knowledge of the technological domain, and business users, focused on the analysis of the potential requirements and impact of the solutions on the business.

Membership in this joint group will be open to interested AMWA and/or EBU members. Participants need not belong to both organizations

Co-chairs: John Footen, NTC, on behalf of AMWA and Giorgio Dimino, RAI, on behalf of EBU.