



Search: nobbs, teletrax



• Receive custom RSS



• Receive custom e-mail newsletters



Interview: Teletrax president Andy Nobbs

Last week, [Teletrax](#) announced a deal with the Associated Press to track the broadcast use of the news agency's syndicated footage.

The deal was a watershed for the company, aligning it with the world's largest newsgathering organization and cementing its position as the leading provider of video use monitoring and reporting to the Fourth Estate.

Launched in 2002 as a joint venture between [Royal Philips Electronics](#) and [Medialink](#), London-based Teletrax has built its business by monitoring the broadcast use of news, advertising and promotional footage for the likes of ABC News, NBC, CBS, Fox, BBC, Reuters Television, the United Nations and Euro RSCG, in addition to the AP.

Relying on video watermarking technology developed by Philips, based on underlying technology from [Digimarc](#), Teletrax inserts an invisible signal in footage released by its clients and maintains a network of detectors that monitor broadcasts on 1500 channels in 50 countries, including all 210 U.S. DMAs.

The systems allow footage providers to verify how their content is being used and to develop appropriate business models around its use.

Lately, Teletrax has turned its attention to tracking video usage over the Internet as content owners look to develop new Web-based business models.

Content Agenda recently spent a few minutes with Teletrax president Andy Nobbs to discuss how watermarking, digital fingerprinting and other forensic techniques could be used to enable new digital distribution strategies.



Andy Nobbs
President, Teletrax

Related Links:

[Teletrax](#)

[Playing by the rules: sports rights management](#) – by Andy Nobbs (originally appeared in [Sport & Technology's Feb. '07 newsletter](#))

[News: Millenia 3 Partners with Teletrax for television networks' advertising verification](#)

[More 10x9 Q&As](#)

CA: What prompted Teletrax to start looking at Internet tracking of video?

Nobbs: We'd be fools not to, wouldn't we? Philips has a whole suite of content identification products, everything from fingerprinting tools to audio watermarks and video watermarks—we use their video watermarking technology for broadcast tracking—and some of our clients have been asking us about Internet tracking. Then in February, the [Motion Picture Assn. of America] held a round of tests with various different technologies to see if they would be suitable for filtering content—they were mostly interested in fingerprinting as opposed to watermarking—and we participated in those tests.

CA: What are the differences between watermarking and digital fingerprinting?

Nobbs: With watermarking, you insert a bit of code into the video and the code is carried with that piece of video wherever it goes. It's a great technology for proving provenance. Anytime a piece of video airs, for instance, value changes hands. So if you're a stakeholder in the piece of video, you obviously have an interest in knowing when value is changing hands.

Fingerprinting is more of a passive technology. You take a sample of a long-form video and store it in a database, and then you compare a piece of found footage to the pattern you have stored. A lot of people use audio, because it's easier, but we think video [fingerprinting] is better. It's probably the right technology for internet tracking, which is why the MPAA is interested in it. It's also a great tool for competitive analysis, such as tracking where a competitor is running a particular ad, or how often a piece of your news footage is being used compared to a competitor's.

CA: Why do you believe video fingerprinting is better than using audio?

Nobbs: For one thing, on the Internet, the audio track very often gets disassociated from the video, so if you're going off the audio you're not getting the full picture of what's happening to the video. And if you're trying to filter video, you can't always rely on the audio track.

CA: Is anyone using video fingerprinting for that purpose on a meaningful scale?

Nobbs: Video is very much an emergent market and the MPAA is driving a lot of the interest. But there's interest coming from other places as well. It's getting increasingly difficult for TV executives to know how well their content is performing on all the different screens it shows up on these days, for instance.

CA: What sort of changes to the distribution infrastructure would be required to implement a video fingerprinting system and what would it cost?

Nobbs: If you were using it in a content filtering application, content owners would have to compile a database of fingerprints, which would take some time. They'd also have to change their workflow to allow for the fingerprinting step. Network operators and distributors would then have to configure their systems to check each piece of content against the database. All of that would have some cost attached to it, so the question becomes, who's going to pay for it. Right now, I think you're seeing people taking a step back and saying, not me.

Then there's the matter of the database [of fingerprints] itself. Who owns it? Who has access to it? How else could it be used? All of those questions would need to be worked out.

CA: What about with a system based on watermarks rather than fingerprinting?

Nobbs: There you're talking about different kinds of applications, so the economics would look very different. We see watermarking really as a tool for

increasing ROI on content by enabling monetization, so you can't think about the costs in the same way. In a tracking application, for instance, each time you detect the watermark you have an opportunity to monetize it.

With some of our video syndication clients, for instance, we're seeing a migration away from a subscription relationship with their clients to more of a transactional model. It allows for much more open access to the content because you can just bill the distributor for each use. Watermarking is really a way to let content flow and then build business models on top of it.

[*Click here for more interviews and Q&As*](#)