

The Media Multiverse with Roy Dvorkin

Zelena Khan: From TransPerfect and A to Z productions, this is NEXT. I'm Zelena Khan, your host. Support for this podcast comes from TransPerfect, a family of companies providing language services and technology solutions for global businesses. Connect your brand to the world and visit [transperfect.com](https://www.transperfect.com).

Hi, everyone. Here we are with season three, with a brand new set of guests to give you insight on developing not only your business but also yourselves. Hopefully, these discussions will help make you a better leader, a better employee, and an all-around better person.

The term media has evolved over the years, especially in the last decade. At one time, the only media we had was the printing industry. Remember newspapers? Then came radio, then television. Now with the internet and social media, the way we communicate has forever changed and it keeps on changing. Our next guest knows a thing or two about this.

Today, we have Roy Dvorkin, Vice President of Media and Entertainment at TransPerfect to discuss what's next for media, and how technology is evolving to meet the ever-changing needs of this industry.

Roy welcome to NEXT. How are you doing today?

Roy Dvorkin: I'm good. Good to be here.

Zelena Khan: So Roy, can you tell us a little bit about what you do at TransPerfect?

Roy Dvorkin: Well, I'm the Vice President of Media and Entertainment. I'm responsible for growing the media division here at TransPerfect.

Zelena Khan: You and I have talked about this before, but media has been probably one of the most underserved industries in the language space. Why do you think it's such a focus for TransPerfect right now?

Roy Dvorkin: I think it's been a focus for quite some time. I just didn't think we really had a vision. And I think also it was really hard for, you know, our sales team to understand what media is or what video is.

And since the pandemic really hit, you know, everybody started communicating via video either through Facebook or through web conferencing like what we're doing now. Or through the “Netflixes” of the world. So everybody's just consuming video in such a rapid pace and in their daily life that now I think more people understand what video is and then they started seeing what subtitling is and understanding how subtitling can affect the viewing experience.

And also, you know, companies like Netflix really got into dubbing, and you're starting to see more of English dubbing happening in the U.S. and across the world. So people really are now starting to understand what video localization means when historically people watch a lot of shows in their local language and they didn't really see too much subtitling or dubbing around the world, especially in the corporate environment.

Zelena Khan: Great. We talked about the pandemic definitely being a catalyst for a lot of media services. But I think video is definitely on the rise. What are some of the trends you've noticed outside of Netflix as a whole?

Roy Dvorkin: Yeah. Well, just think about your daily experience with video. So, you know, as you start a new company, you're being exposed to training videos, that's one thing. You know, as you go and buy a product now on any e-commerce platform, you're being exposed to a video, either an unboxing video or a product video. And then as you're now, you know, whatever you're experiencing through a web conferencing platform, you know, we're all communicating via video, we're not traveling as much, especially during this pandemic.

And that's here to stay. And then what we're also really seeing our huge growth is coming from the conference space. Most conferences historically were attended in person, and now they're all going virtual, which means that there's a huge video component to virtual or they're going hybrid.

So all of these videos have to be localized. So again, our day-to-day lives are just being exposed to way more video than ever before, beyond consuming it on TV, in an entertainment space.

Zelena Khan: I think human behavior also has something to do with that too. Right? I'm not saying people have gotten lazy, but I think it's just so much easier to consume any piece of information via video than reading a 50-page manual, right?

Roy Dvorkin: Totally. And also what you're starting to see, which is super interesting to me is the text-to-speech, speech-to-text area, and where I'm seeing that you know, just blow up is I'm seeing it on both sides of the spectrum. I'm seeing children, my son's age who is 10 years old, who are speaking into their phone and texting their friends.

And then I'm seeing my parents on the other side, who are, you know, 70 plus years old who are speaking to their phones and texting to their friends. So people are also starting to be more consumed by text-to-speech and speech-to-text. So it's not just a, I would say a video boom, but I would call it an audio-video boom. And I think those go hand in hand together.

Zelena Khan: Yeah. My nephew is five and he definitely uses speech-to-text. You know, we're so consumed by so many things, it's ultimately helping, you know, our day-to-day life right. So I know we've talked about voice synthesis before, too, right?

Roy Dvorkin: Yeah I think that's up and coming. I think that's, you know, probably going to hit much stronger this year than ever before. There are a bunch of companies invested in it. We have a skunk group in it as well, trying to build out some solutions for that. Really, there are just not enough humans to record all the audio around the world. There are probably not enough humans to transcribe all the audio around the world.

So obviously technology needs to play into that if we really want to be able to have, you know, transcripts associated to everything and subtitling, and V.O. associated with everything. So you're going to see a huge explosion happening this year. Technology is way farther than it's ever been. A lot of companies are trying to adopt it.

So it's an interesting space that we're heavily watching and investing into.

Zelena Khan: Roy, video has exploded. I'm sure your client requests have also exploded. With the pandemic and all of us being way more separate than we used to, I feel like a lot of people have relied on video as a way to connect.

Roy Dvorkin: Well, it's just the fact that audio and video are blowing up because we're communicating via audio. We're communicating via video. Podcasting has just taken off and we're on a podcast. So that's a big business for us right now too is podcast localization.

Zelena Khan: Yeah I mean, this is a podcast. Let's talk about some of the podcast services that TransPerfect are providing.

Roy Dvorkin: Yeah. So if you think about podcasting, you're basically telling a story only using audio not really with any video. Some podcasts have video components to it. But we've been using our cloud recording platform StudioNEXT for podcast recording. It's been a huge opportunity for us to record actors and in some cases, some of our clients are asking us to find, you know, famous podcasters in each country or celebrities who aren't necessarily voiceover artists to dub the podcast. And what that has given us the ability to set them up at home, give them a tool to be able to record, and teach them how to be voiceover artists within our cloud recording platform.

No need to have them commute to a studio. No need for them to have to sit down with an engineer. And what we really like about that is we're actually training new talent on becoming voiceover artists without ever knowing what it's like to go to a studio. So they're becoming cloud recording first, or StudioNEXT first, which is what we're trying to do.

Zelena Khan: Let's talk about the main buckets of the media industry. So we have entertainment, corporate, and live in person, right?

Roy Dvorkin: I would call it conference services, entertainment, and corporate.

Zelena Khan: Ok, so let's get into each bucket and what you're noticing amongst your clients. Conferences, which is something I probably didn't really think about in the media space, live conferencing.

Roy Dvorkin: Yeah. So on the conference services side, as I previously mentioned, you know, we're getting into a hybrid model now, where we have people attending in-person, but we also have people attending virtually. And what that means is that we have to localize video, both live video because some of these announcements are long and they don't want to announce them any time before or they're doing some sort of a keynote. Or we're doing some really fast turnaround stuff where they're making some late modifications to the video and the video is not completed until the event goes live.

And what you have to do with that, or what the requests have been coming in is they are looking for us to do interpretation of those videos with a very fast turnaround. And that's actually been another use case that we really didn't anticipate when creating StudioNEXT. And what we've done is we've trained our interpreters to become voiceover artists.

So we've onboarded them. We've trained them how to use our StudioNEXT platform. And rather than providing them a translation within the platform or a translated script, they're doing live interpretation, in the platform. We're recording that, we're then mixing it and delivering it to our client in a very fast turnaround, which was never done before.

So we're probably performing one of the fastest voiceover turnarounds in the world right now, using our interpreters. On the other side, the live events are really popular. So we're doing live captioning and live subtitling in source language and target language. And then we're doing a lot of offline subtitling and voiceover as well.

If you think about these conferences and these big events, you know, we're talking about hundreds of videos, many languages. And these events now no longer cater to a zip code, they now cater to the globe. So they want to be able to have people from all over the world, participate and listen to what the new products are coming out or what the new services that certain companies or tech companies are launching around the world.

Zelena Khan: Yeah. When I'm thinking about how many events I've been invited to even the events, TransPerfect has had, it's important to have both of those pieces.

Roy Dvorkin: Yeah. Well, so on the corporate side, you know, you're seeing every product have some sort of video with or without audio, but there is some sort of video component to it. And you're also seeing a lot of training videos happen.

Anyone who started at a new company recently has gone through their LMS and they're being exposed to videos all day long, right? I mean, you're seeing CEO quarterly earnings presentations. You're seeing marketing videos. You know how many videos are you being hit on daily from Facebook or Instagram or even LinkedIn?

You know all of those videos have to be localized into one language or another. So I think from the corporate perspective, you're seeing a ton of video coming out and we're going to be hit with more and more videos as we continue to move away from a text-based world to an audio-video-based world.

Zelena Khan: And now entertainment, which is, you know, what I think about when I think about our media services. And you know, when you think

entertainment and audio, video, you think Netflix. So, Netflix is basically everywhere except China, correct?

Roy Dvorkin: That's correct. I don't know if it's everywhere, but it's in a lot of places. They still have a big growth plan, but yes, there are in a lot of places.

Zelena Khan: But just thinking about Netflix, and then I think about, you know, Amazon, I think about Hulu and Apple TV. There's essentially a streaming war. How does this streaming war affect our business?

Roy Dvorkin: It's affecting us greatly. You know, there are literally not enough subtitlers, editors, engineers, and actors around the world right now to take on the demand of entertainment content on its own.

And what's happened is that Netflix has proved itself out to be so successful that now everybody's chasing Netflix. And the problem you're having is that it's not like all these competitors are speaking to each other saying, "Hey, we're going to launch in this country. Why don't you wait a month until you launch?" They're all launching in the same countries at the same time, which has just caused a boom where, you know, there's just, there are not enough translators right now, or subtitles around the world to take on some of these markets where you're having multiple streaming platforms launch at the same time.

And by the way, there's still this thing called linear channels out there too, which means that all these channels that we're still watching are also localizing in these markets. So that you're going to see the diminishing. You know the linear channels will diminish over time and you'll see these streaming channels continue to grow.

But right now we're in a world where you're still seeing a lot of both. You know, I think one of the first companies, or one of the first linear companies that made the decision was Disney, was to shut down their linear channels. And right now in the UK, there is no Disney on linear. And you're going to see more of that happening across the board, as people shut down their linear channels and then launch their streaming platforms.

Well, all you're going to see is you're going to see the same thing happen. You're still going to have, you know, 500 channels to choose from. They're just going to be digital channels. Some will be subscription on-demand where you have no commercials and some will be advertising on-demand. You'll have commercials in it as well, and get the channel for free or at a minimum price.

But at least you get to select what you want to watch rather than having to have content pushed to you. You can actually pick what you want to choose.

Zelena Khan: Are people still watching DVDs?

Roy Dvorkin: I think there's still a DVD market out there, but I bet you it's tiny. I don't know if anyone's watching a DVD. I think the only thing that's out there right now is probably Blu-ray.

So I think also when you think about entertainment and streaming, you think about binge-watching right? What's the last thing you've binged on?

I binge I, well, I, unfortunately, during the holidays I had COVID so there was nothing really left to do, but, but what did I binge? I don't know. I'm bingeing a lot of right now, foreign language content, you know what Netflix calls Local Language Originals where it's content with English subtitles.

I'm one of the consumers that is choosing to watch it in its source language with English subtitles. But it brings us to the point that, you know, English dubbing is actually really big. Netflix was the first to really go into it. They're seeing a lot of data of consumers watching it in English dub, which is first for the U.S. consumer base.

And we always thought of English dubbing with those old Kung Fu movies where it was just horribly done, and now the English dubbing has gotten a lot better. So I'm starting to binge more foreign-language content.

Zelena Khan: I mean, speaking of dubbing, Squid Game, right? What an amazing dubbing success.

Roy Dvorkin: Well, I would say it was a localization success. I think some people are watching a dub, some are watching it subbed. But even my experience of Squid Game was pretty amazing. You know, I downloaded it on my iPad and I jumped on a plane and I binged the entire show while traveling to Europe and back. It was really cool, it was an awesome experience. But you know, five years ago that wouldn't have been done.

Zelena Khan: I still haven't seen it yet.

Roy Dvorkin: It's good. Watch it.

Zelena Khan: I will get to it. And MediaNEXT is basically one of our fastest-growing solutions right now, right? So can you explain a little bit about some of the solutions that TransPerfect provides?

Roy Dvorkin: Yeah, so we, you know, about five years ago, we made the decision to bring technology into the media localization space. It was something that was lacking. So MediaNEXT really involves bringing technology to the MediaNEXT platform, and our various services of subtitling together and trying to provide a solution for our clients to save time and money, as the video business really starts booming around the world.

Zelena Khan: So when you hear media, when you think, well, I mean, there's a big, there are two big words that surround the language space: machine translation. Some people see it as a threat. Some people see it as a, you know, a secret weapon. What's your thought on machine translation in the language media space?

Roy Dvorkin: Well, I think machine translation for us is always going to be used as a productivity tool. I don't know if it's going to a hundred percent replace humans ever.

You know, how are you going to machine translate Harry Potter where it's not even real English words being spoken, right? So where we're starting to see a lot more machine translation being utilized, we're seeing it more utilized in the corporate space, structured content, maybe some more corporate and product videos, maybe even some documentary-style content on the entertainment side.

So we're going to look at it as just a tool in our tool belt, but we're always going to have humans review the content. And in most cases, you know, we have clients right now that are trying to look at just using machine translation, maybe for second-tier content. But, you know, we find machine translation interesting, and definitely something that we're part of.

Zelena Khan: The demand is outweighing the supply, right?

Roy Dvorkin: There is just way too much video out there and not enough people.

Zelena Khan: I'm so overwhelmed with content. There's so much to watch. And I think about closed captioning and things like that. What are some things your clients like, do you find that more of those situations are happening, like

where media and another TransPerfect service is being tied together. Is that happening?

Roy Dvorkin: Well, I think what we're seeing at TransPerfect is media is now is looked at as a horizontal, not as a vertical because you're seeing media affect all of our verticals. So the fact that we did a project with a DataForce client. DataForce is in the business of collecting human-curated data to train AI algorithms to help them build out some speech-to-texts engines, you know, and recorded it using our StudioNEXT cloud-recording platform is just, you know, obvious. So StudioNEXT is our cloud recording solution, where we allow actors, directors, clients to participate in a cloud recording environment, recording from the comforts of their home.

It was something that we decided to go into before the pandemic. It turned out to be an incredible solution for us when the pandemic hit. We're also starting to, you know, use our technology across all our other verticals. You know, the travel business is creating videos, the leisure space of creating videos, you know finance; everyone's creating a video.

So, you know, we made the decision last year actually to make media as a horizontal, not as a vertical anymore at this company, because it is hitting almost all verticals across the organization. And going back to your question of what are clients asking for? I think right now, what we're seeing and where we're really seeing a boom is live, everybody wants live.

So we're trying to see a lot of people wanting live, same-language captioning or subtitling, which we're getting heavily involved in, especially with all these web conferencing platforms going on. And then we're also seeing, you know, speed-to-market. People are trying to launch content very quickly in multiple languages as soon as it's completed. So speed is very important. So speed can play into both live and offline.

Zelena Khan: Can we also talk about accessibility a bit and how that relates to media and localization as well? I'm noticing a lot with our own accessibility practice that video is being heavily tied in. Are you guys working together at all?

Roy Dvorkin: Well, we're working together on everything because if you think about, you know, much of the accessibility happening, is happening in video and you know, more requirements are coming up for people with disabilities in video related matters. So, you know, we're doing a lot of closed captioning. That's both offline and live.

We're also getting heavily involved now in audio description, and audio description is another perfect fit for our StudioNEXT platform. It's a single narrator voice recording, you know, in between speaking parts on a piece of video. So what you're seeing is the accessibility team really starting to take advantage of our tools and utilizing them for all their needs.

And, you know, now we, you know, everything has to have some sort of a subtitle file, or at least it's getting going that direction, so even in countries where accessibility is not a requirement. And what they're starting to see is people are watching video with sound off or they're trying to multitask, which means that they're trying to do something else while they're watching a video or a piece of content.

So having the subtitles there, even though you might not have a disability is actually a great guide for you to enjoy your video experience.

Zelena Khan: I'm definitely one of those people. I really enjoy having subtitles.

Roy Dvorkin: Yeah, and we have them on for my kids. I have a 10 and five-year-old and those subtitles are on all the time.

Zelena Khan: Nice little reading, speed reading activity too.

Roy Dvorkin: That's right.

Zelena Khan: So, I know another tool we have is Timed Text. Correct?

Roy Dvorkin: That's correct.

Zelena Khan: Can you talk about that?

Roy Dvorkin: Yeah. So Timed Text was created for the beginning of the process. If you think about video, every video starts with a script. So Timed Text was the tool that we developed to first create a transcript.

If a transcript is provided to us, we adjust it. If it's not, we created it in Timed Text. The second stage of any kind of script or subtitle file is translation. So our translators translate within Timed Text. So, you know, Timed Text, if you think about video, every video starts with a script and a script either needs to be created or it's provided to us.

So we ingest that script if it's provided to us in Timed Text, or we create the script within Timed Text. The next stage of scripts or subtitle files is translation. So all of our translation happens within the Timed Text tool. And the advantage of that is one, it's streaming, so we don't have to pass any files around the world.

So all of our translators around the world are working within our Timed Text tool to translate. So they don't need to download any type of video, which makes it very secure. It also has integrated glossary management. It has integrated translation memory. Then if we want to go down the machine translation approach, we're also integrated with that.

And then once the translation is complete, it gives our clients also the ability to review within our platforms. Our clients can license the platform and review any type of translations for scripts or subtitling within the Timed Text tool. And we think that's an awesome experience for our clients. Our clients are really enjoying it and it really gives them an ability to translate in a production system.

So again, the product is always streaming. They'll have access to all the glossaries and the translation memory as well. And then the final output, depending on whatever client spec is would either go onto recording for an audio recording or then we output some sort of a subtitle file for our clients, right out of the Timed Text tool.

Zelena Khan: Where do you see this going? When you think of the streaming wars when you think of people trying to get to market as quick as possible. Also, when you think about just like content creation in general, where do you see audio and video going in the next five years?

Roy Dvorkin: You know, there's going to be a peak, right? There's going to, some of these platforms are going to fail.

They're not all going to succeed. You're going to see the growth of audio and video. You're going to see people creating more and more stuff, but where is this going to go? I think that you know, the consumers are going to choose which is going to be the best part. We're going to decide on what we want to see and what we don't want to see. Pushing content to us will come to an end at some point. We'll be able to pick whatever we want to see.

And you're going to see a lot more technology get involved, meaning speech-to-text and text-to-speech. You're going to be hearing a lot more synthetic voices out there that you're not even going to know are synthetic, right? You're going to be reading subtitles that were created by a machine.

So you're going to see a lot more of that happening in the next five years, but there's going to be enough to go around. I don't think the humans are going to be out of a job. I think that they should be wary of it because I think in the next 10 years, you know, there's going to be a lot of humans. And especially on the actor side, you know, are we going to be able to ever mimic Tom Cruise?

I think so. You know, people are doing it now. I don't think Tom Cruise has given up his voice to be able to mimic his voice yet. But I think that we're going to see, you know, Tom Cruise, speaking German and Tom Cruise, the real Tom Cruise, doesn't speak German. I think that's the next thing. And it's going to be really cool.

Zelena Khan: That's exciting yet scary. Don't you think?

Roy Dvorkin: Yeah. And it's going to change consumer behavior. Because right now, if you go to Germany, the voice, the German voice of Tom Cruise sounds nothing like Tom Cruise, you know, and when they hear the English, Tom Cruise, they're like, that's not Tom Cruise, but it really is. So what happens when you mix technology and the real Tom Cruise and you hear Tom Cruise's voice in German, it's going to be very different.

Zelena Khan: Speaking of, I really, as a Bollywood lover, you know, watch Bollywood movies. I've really enjoyed seeing some of my favorite movies on Netflix. That is so nice.

Roy Dvorkin: But look, they really coined the local language originals thing. They really brought local content into other countries on a high scale, and it's just taken off. Everyone's following suit.

Zelena Khan: Roy, I know with the pandemic, it's been hard to go to certain industry events and meet clients in person. But I think this year, hopefully with things working out well, fingers crossed, you're going to be at a couple of events this year.

Roy Dvorkin: Yeah, we're all in on the events. And you know, we'll see what happens when they happen. But you know, we're going to be attending the Kidscreen event, which is the largest kids and family event. We're going to be going to NAB which is a video or media-based technology conference. We're probably going to be hitting Asia in the middle of the year if we're allowed.

And then we'll be doing MIPCOM in October, which is going to be, you know, the largest gathering of the entertainment industry around the world. And then

we'll be doing IBC in September, which is another technology conference happening in Amsterdam. So we're all in on conferences. We'll probably be attending a couple more as well.

But as long as we're going to be allowed to attend like we're there. I think, you know, face-to-face communication is great. We did attend MIPCOM last October, which was the first conference we attended. You know, attendance was down dramatically, but everyone was there to really talk business, see each other, you know, and have face-to-face communication. It was a nice thing. We really enjoyed it.

Zelena Khan: It's nice to see people in person again. So if anyone wants to learn a little bit about you, what you're doing with MediaNEXT, where can they find you?

Roy Dvorkin: Yeah. You know, we have blogs on our TransPerfect website. We have a MediaNEXT website. I'm on LinkedIn if you want to hit me up on LinkedIn. I'm happy to answer any questions, and would love to meet people.

If you're attending any of those conferences that we mentioned, schedule some time with us. We're going to start booking Kidscreen. We have a big, our big technology conference happening in San Francisco called GlobalLink NEXT. We've been presenting our MediaNEXT solution there for the last five years, and we are going to be making a big announcement.

We're going to talk about the updates that we've done with StudioNEXT with our Timed Text tool. But we're also going to be launching an entirely new platform out there. We really want to be able to help our clients share this content with their employee base. So look out for that, and we're really excited about it. Joe Campbell and team will be presenting something on, what I think is the next big thing that's going to happen at TransPerfect, which I'm most excited about.

Zelena Khan: Roy, thank you so much for joining us. We're really excited about this announcement and hope all the events go well.

Roy Dvorkin: Thanks for having us. I'm excited to be seeing everybody in person. And reach out and lookout. We, you know, we have a bunch more announcements coming out. You know, our product line is developing fast and furious, and we're going to be launching a couple of new tools as well within our existing products. Watch more video and listen to our podcast.

Zelena Khan: Great. Anything else you wanted to say, Roy?

Roy Dvorkin: For more information, you guys can go to our website. Its transperfect.com/medianext, or you can email us at medianext@transperfect.com. Look forward to hearing from you.

Zelena Khan: With this media explosion and the ability to stream any time or anywhere, we're all experiencing some content overload, which can be a good or bad thing for some people. But remember, balance is key. It's fascinating that I can watch something in English; a movie, a show, listen to a joke, and someone on the other side of the world can experience the same thing but watching it in their native language thanks to some of the services MediaNEXT provides. To learn more about TransPerfect and media next. Visit transperfect.com/medianext. Thank you for listening. Be kind to yourselves and be kind to each other.

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