

## Quantum's SDLT 600A with DLTxchange: Extending the DLT Platform for the Video Market

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Quantum's DLT tape technology has become a mainstay data protection platform in the enterprise. The vendor has continuously extended the DLT feature set by introducing enhancements in manageability, diagnostics, and data reliability. Now Quantum is looking to tackle the unique challenges of the professional video market with its SDLT 600A with DLTxchange product, an

extension of its SDLT 600 offering.

### Data Management Challenges for the Professional Video Market

Most professional video environments today consist of file-based applications for Creation, Post-Production, Playout, and Archive. But because these applications rely on proprietary file formats, video professionals must use standard video tape formats and video interfaces to move content between these various stages in the production process. Video interfaces are, however, highly inefficient, as they transfer content at video rates (one hour of video takes one hour to transfer), and because the transfer process itself is quite labor intensive.

Content is typically created in video tape format. It must then be digitized to a file format for Editing or Playout. Following the broadcast, the video tape is again ingested into the Playout server that is placed in the archive. Upon retrieving the content from archive, it is converted again into a digital file format prior to broadcast. In many cases, a piece of content may move through these workflows multiple times.

Sound a bit backward?

Video tape's inability to preserve metadata throughout this conversion makes matters even more complex. Metadata is the self-describing information or data about the data. In the professional video world, metadata may include scene, date, location, recording details and actors. Without using metadata, finding a specific subset of content among hundreds of hours can be quite difficult and time consuming.

This type of workflow process is highly inefficient, laborious, and error-prone. Indeed, it is arcane, particularly when considering the massive growth in digital content and high definition programming now facing video professionals.

### The Promise of File-Based Processing: MXF

Not surprisingly there is a strong interest on the part of the end-user community to move

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to a more standard and thus, highly more efficient, data interchange format.

The Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers has adopted the Material Exchange Format or MXF precisely for this purpose. MXF is an open file format that facilitates the interchange of audio and visual content across servers, workstations and other specialized devices. MXF makes it possible to seamlessly share content across different applications while preserving content integrity and quality. Moreover, MXF is metadata aware, meaning that important descriptive information about the content is not lost upon transfer. MXF is optimized for broad interoperability with compression, network, and operating system independence. In all, this versatile format has the potential to transform how digital content is managed in the future.

### SDLT 600A with DLTxchange

Quantum's SDLT 600A with DLTxchange is a data tape solution targeted specifically for professional video environments looking to take advantage of the efficiencies in file-based operations.

The SDLT 600A extends the core SDLT 600 drive technology, adding support for MXF, a Gigabit Ethernet networking interface, and a directly mountable file system using FTP. The net result is a Network-Attached, File-accessible storage system that can be seamlessly used to store, transport, and share production content across the entire spectrum of operations in most video environments. This means that the solution can be used to provide storage for editing

workstations and for long-term archival alike.

Because the solution is MXF aware, users have ready access to metadata elements and can seamlessly retrieve sub-clips of content based on their timecode.

The SDLT 600A plugs directly into the IP network giving users direct drag and drop access to files via standard FTP clients or a built-in Java applet. Drive performance is 36MB/s enabling video file transfers at much higher rates than real-time. The solution has also been optimized for capacity. A single tape of 300GB can store more than six hours of 100 Mb/s HD (High-Definition) content or twenty four hours of 25Mb/s SD (Standard-Definition) content.

### Use Cases and Benefits

The SDLT 600A is a highly versatile solution with a number of high value applications in video environments. The product can be used for workstation backup as well as for the storage, transport, and sharing of production content throughout the production lifecycle.

Another application of the SDLT 600A would be in mobile environments where the drive would enable the transfer of content to and from playout servers. The ability of the SDLT600A to serve as both working storage and as a content transfer platform should make the product highly appealing in the marketplace.

The SDLT 600A offers a number of other advantages in addition to its versatility.

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End-users can expect savings – given the economies of scale in mass volume production of DLT cartridges when compared to video tapes – and ongoing operational costs given the efficiencies in content transfer and workflow processes. Ease of use and installation is another key benefit. The solution integrates directly into the Ethernet environment and provides seamless access to content through Windows explorer or any web browser.

Finally, because it wraps digital content in MXF, the SDLT600A with DLTxchange gives users a degree of independence from legacy apps that have historically been maintained in the event that content needs to be retrieved from archive. With MXF, the content will be just as accessible without these proprietary applications.

What is truly unique about the SDLT600A is that it gives the video community, the best of both the data tape and video tape worlds. That means the reliability, performance, and cost advantages of data tape with the flexibility, partial restores, and accessibility of video tape.

### Business Model Impacts for the Vertical

We would expect a technology like this to not only have operational benefits but also core business model benefits for players in the video and media verticals. With operational burdens eased somewhat, companies will have more time and resources to devote to monetizing their core digital assets in new and innovative ways. A faster, more precise and more reliable

retrieval process can give companies a distinct competitive advantage in delivering archived content as it becomes in demand, generating significant royalty payment streams.

### Taneja Group Opinion

Vertical product strategies are inherently challenging to execute on because they require a much more granular understanding of customer challenges and business processes than horizontally focused go-to-market approaches. But when customer problems are well understood and reflected in the product, the opportunity for value creation is enormous.

We believe that Quantum's entry into the professional video market is well-timed and holds significant promise. The market is ripe for new technologies like the SDLT 600A – it's large, growing, and currently lacks technology platforms that are well aligned with its business processes.

The feature-set and capabilities of the SDLT 600A with DLTxchange clearly demonstrate that Quantum has done its homework before getting into the vertical.

As with any new technology built around an emerging standard like MXF, we encourage users to exercise caution and check the "specs." Early on standards may not encompass the full capabilities of the older technologies.

That said, the potential gains in operational efficiencies, cost savings, and flexibility should find significant appeal in the market

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and give users a compelling reason to check out the SDLT 600A with DLTxchange.

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