

A Sector Assembles to Turn Video Pirates Into Gold

Turning anti-piracy into rights management is really starting to resonate for content holders, and vendors are quickly cutting deals

By [Liz Gannes](#)

As President Barack Obama recently learned, it's hip to be anti-pirate. But claiming anti-piracy as your life's focus? That's just so antagonistic.

Companies that have won the trust of major networks, and studios have been giving copyright protection a much-needed dose of nuance recently. In a world in which users are going to upload content every time you fail to reach them at exactly the moment they want to watch it, these companies have persuaded content owners to start to think of so-called pirates as viral marketers.

The Missed Opportunity of Unofficial Views

Monetizing unauthorized uploads requires a copyright holder to upload everything it wants watched to a fingerprinting vendor. The fingerprinting vendor also scans live TV, especially for time-sensitive events, like sports. Those two sources constitute an index key that the finger-printer can reference while combing through Web video sites looking for a match—or a sample, a poor copy, or a mash-up. Then, if the content holder has agreed in advance, the finger-printer can leave the unlicensed version up, and overlay links to the official version (basically, house ads) and/or monetize the clip with additional advertising.

Unofficial uploads of premium content are often more popular than official ones. For instance, though Avril Lavigne's [official version](#) of her music video for *Girlfriend* is [the most-viewed YouTube video of all time](#) TubeMogul recently measured that just 39.5% of the some 1 billion views of her videos and other people's videos using her songs on YouTube come from official uploads.

Turning anti-piracy into rights management is really starting to resonate for content holders, and vendors are quickly cutting deals to ensure they are compatible with each other. After all, monetizing an unauthorized upload requires the participation of the content holder, the video site, the fingerprinter, and the advertiser or someone representing the advertiser. You need to lay a little groundwork in order to make that happen.

Dealmaking Land Grab

In recent weeks, advertising management provider FreeWheel, a company founded by former DoubleClick execs to focus on ad sales rights for video, cut deals with competing fingerprinting providers Attributor and Vobile, while meanwhile Vobile partnered up with ad network YuMe. [FreeWheel](#) works with CBS, Warner Bros., Veoh, Joost, blip.tv, and Sling, while [Vobile](#) works with 56.com as well as many movie studios, and [Attributor](#) works with Turner Broadcasting. Elsewhere, [Auditude](#) works with MySpace, MTV and Warner Bros; BayTSP, and Audible Magic are getting in the game as well. And those are just the deals that have been publicly announced; most of this goes on behind closed doors.

But YouTube was actually first to market with such a technology, with its [Content ID](#) tool released in [October 2007](#). By developing its Content ID system in-house (and with some help from Audible Magic) and combining it with its own ad sales, YouTube laid much of the groundwork.