



Barstool Sports Bets Big on Video

Home to the #1 sports podcast, “Pardon My Take,” and #1 female podcast, “Call Her Daddy,” EditShare customer Barstool Sports creates engaging content with distribution on multiple platforms including web, apps, podcasts, radio, video, social, events, pay per view, subscription and television to an incredibly engaged audience. An interesting success story, Barstool Sports started as a free gambling tip sheet given away at subway stations throughout the Boston area in 2003. Navigating the rise of online publishing, Barstool made the timely pivot to video and became one of the industry’s major media brands. Their sports content and locker room humor, while sometimes controversial, have been wildly successful. So much so, that in January 2020, Penn National Gaming took a 36% stake in the company, valuing the Barstool Sports media business at \$450 million.

From sneakernet scramble to pro media player

Producing a wide variety of content in the sports, esports, and lifestyle genres, Barstool’s 23 video shows and 32 podcasts reach a highly engaged audience of 66 million unique visitors every

month. In addition, their YouTube channels have 2.4 million subscribers total with 629 thousand on their main channel. TikTok is even higher at 8.7 million followers. This is all produced by a team of over 100 people, with many of the show producers editing their own videos. Until recently, all of the content was dispersed across the company, and the many editors, via an inefficient sneakernet set up.

Jason Zapata, integration sales manager for AbelCine, an EditShare channel partner based in Brooklyn, New York, has supported Barstool Sports productions since 2018. “Barstool was expanding quickly with no real way to effectively manage the content. Each editor had their own hard drive, sometimes multiple hard drives that they would shuttle from production to production,” explains Zapata. “I immediately thought of EditShare. I knew the custom metadata tags and automated workflow capabilities of FLOW combined with the store and archive capabilities of EFS would be the technology game changer they needed.”

“When we were growing so fast and moving so quickly, it was always easier to just get some more hard drives,” comments Pete Overmyer, head of media technology and production for Barstool Sports. “Our move to a new office in 2019 afforded us more production opportunities. This also meant generating more content which exacerbated our sneakernet setup. After a couple of months, I said, ‘Okay, let’s move forward with a platform that can support this content business.’ And we called Jason at AbelCine and placed an order for EditShare’s FLOW and EFS.”

Chase Butler, Barstool Sports senior video editor / graphics manager, explains some of the inefficiencies the team had faced: “We had three craft editors/graphists supporting up to 40 producer/editors. Before EditShare, each producer/editor had their own individual drive and we were spending at least an hour a day transferring files via card or drive. And, there were no backups. If you needed specific media, you would have to connect with the person that owned that show and see if they still had it. This was especially challenging when you wanted to do any type of compilation video.”

Butler says they also had to deal with numerous card failures, overwrites, loss of footage, and all the other problems of non-centralized storage:

“Those types of things cost time and money. And we wanted to invest that time and money better, so we started centralizing and managing our content with FLOW and EFS.”

While Butler and the teams that worked on multi-shoot content were eager to see the new workflow implemented, the introduction of the concept of centralized storage faced a bit more initial suspicion from the Barstool producers who were used to shooting and editing their own material. Once they saw how easy it was to work and collaborate, however, they came around quickly. “We started with one switch that had 38 available ports. We filled that immediately and had to get another switch to handle the queue of producers waiting to get hooked into the platform,” says Overmyer.

And then the pandemic hit.

Coping with COVID

Barstool switched from sneakernet to EditShare just ahead of COVID-19, enabling them to hurdle the challenges of a physical business lockdown and social distancing restrictions.

“EditShare products during the COVID-19



shutdown have been great,” says Butler. “With applications like AirFLOW and FLOW Story it’s easy to manage the storage and access content remotely.” Butler explains one particular scenario, “We use a lot of stock for our daily shows. So I set up a media space that is a collection of our celebrity stock imagery organized by folder. With AirFLOW, everyone has access. I upload a photo with a click. The team instantly sees the file and can easily download it. It’s a huge time saver especially when you have up to 40 editors looking for stock.”

EditShare solutions also enabled Barstool to have a much more efficient Snapchat workflow. Previously, they would export material to Dropbox and send links to the graphics teams, who would then download the material, work on it, and upload the finished piece. “Now it’s like, ‘Here’s my exported file, it’s on the server, grab it.’” says Butler. “They can grab that file, immediately start working off that file, and then they can upload to Snapchat. Again, another EditShare timesaver.”

Future proofing

Barstool is also using FLOW in conjunction with AWS as part of its business continuity workflow.

“It’s a two-step process,” explains Overmyer. “First, everything gets loaded onto our backup tapes, then from there it is also backed up automatically to an AWS Storage bucket when FLOW detects new material. If we need something, we hope it’s on the active storage. If it’s not there, then we know it’s on the backup tape locally, so we can pull that quickly. And if there were a flood, fire or some other disaster in the office, everything that is in EFS should also be in an AWS bucket in the cloud.”

With their studios and remote productions underpinned by EditShare, Barstool production teams know exactly where their media is and they know that it’s safe. All show recordings are centralized directly to the EFS with FLOW tracking metadata and offering tools for automating transcoding, file migration and nightly backups to the cloud and tape. And with EditShare’s extensive cloud support, the possibilities to take more of Barstool Sports productions on the road are endless.

Given the company’s track record so far, no one would want to bet against a move towards more live content being anything other than successful.

