

Bridging the Digital Divide: ST Engineering iDirect's Impact on Connectivity in Africa

Our Chief Editor, Chris Green, and Rami Moussawi, Senior Product Manager at ST Engineering iDirect, discussed the company's efforts to bridge the digital divide in Africa through satellite technology, with a focus on their product Skyflow, designed for efficient video content delivery.



INTERVIEW BY:

Chris Green

Chief Editor of TechAfrica News



 **ST Engineering**

 **iDIRECT**

We're here at AfricaCom 2023. I'm with Rami Moussawi, who's the Senior Product Manager at ST Engineering iDirect. Rami, it's good to have you here. Good to talk with you. What are you showcasing at AfricaCom this year?

We have a broad range of solutions covering various sectors such as seller, backhaul, enterprise, mobility, media and broadcast, and government and defense.

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Traditional video delivery over the internet isn't optimized, leading to significant bandwidth consumption. Skyflow addresses this by delivering video content over IP or OTT in a more efficient way.

RAMI MOUSSAWI

SENIOR PRODUCT MANAGER

Our goal is to address the digital divide by leveraging satellite technology. Currently, I'm focused on the media and broadcast side of the portfolio, where we've made significant advancements to enhance our offerings.

That's interesting. One of your products, Skyflow, has been talked about as bridging the digital divide in Africa. Can you provide more details about this?

Certainly. Skyflow emerged from the realization that a substantial portion of internet traffic is video-related. Traditional video delivery over the internet isn't optimized, leading to significant bandwidth consumption. Skyflow addresses this by delivering video content over IP or OTT in a more efficient way. We collaborated with experts, including OTT specialists, to develop this solution. It's not just

for rural areas; even established services face challenges.

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We're showcasing the MCX8000, our latest multi-carrier satellite gateway solution. It's a broadcast modulator redesigned for density and modularity, capable of handling up to four modulators in one rack unit.

RAMI MOUSSAWI

SENIOR PRODUCT MANAGER

For instance, a UK broadcaster's poorly delivered FA Cup final highlighted the need for a better approach. Skyflow aims to deliver high-quality video content efficiently, with applications extending beyond entertainment, including education. We're proud to work with institutions

like the National Institute of Radio and Television in Peru to deliver educational content to disconnected regions.

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Over the next couple of years, we anticipate increased acceptance of streaming services. Our mission is to connect people, and video is a powerful medium for that.

RAMI MOUSSAWI

SENIOR PRODUCT MANAGER

Understand the importance of video optimization. With your experience and commitment to Africa, what timescales do you envision for achieving widespread adoption?

Government projects, like the one in Egypt replicating our efforts

in Peru, involve demonstrating the technology and garnering support. While specific timelines are challenging to commit to, we're close to finalizing the Peru project, which could serve as a reference point for similar initiatives. Building momentum requires collaboration with governments, content providers, and institutions, and we're excited about the progress.

As Senior Product Manager, can you share any upcoming product developments that will aid in this endeavor?

Certainly. We're showcasing the MCX8000, our latest multi-carrier satellite gateway solution. It's a broadcast modulator redesigned for density and modularity, capable of handling up to four modulators in one rack unit. The focus is on IP content encapsulation, providing a gateway for broadcasters transitioning from linear to streaming. It complements

Skyflow and enhances overall efficiency.

Considering the ongoing debate about streaming replacing linear, and given the importance of Skyflow, where would you ideally like to see things in about two years?

All our products are available today, and the emphasis is on pushing these solutions in the market. Linear broadcasters are already seeking ways to incorporate streaming to retain customers. Over the next couple of years, we anticipate increased acceptance of streaming services. Our mission is to connect people, and video is a powerful medium for that. Our products can significantly contribute to growing this market, and we're also exploring virtualization and cloud solutions for scalable infrastructure deployment.



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