

VUKUNET 101

OVERVIEW

What is VUKUNET?

VUKUNET is a universal ad platform that connects digital out-of-home networks with ad agencies. The primary platform is a web-based ad management system that has separate portals for media buyers. VUKUNET streamlines and simplifies the advertising process, driving increased revenues to network operators.

What is VUKUNET Ad Management?

VUKUNET Ad Management is an automated ad-serving platform for digital place-based media, allowing owners of screen networks to earn money showing advertisements from in-network advertisers.

The completely web-based platform introduces the first universal ad scheduling, playback and reporting engine to an industry that has had almost no interoperability or standardization across literally hundreds of solution providers and operating networks. By necessity, much of the current process is manual, costly and time-consuming.

The VUKUNET platform for digital out-of-home media (DOOH) network operators and vendors was conceived and designed specifically to address the way advertising agencies approach media buying, and then make it much easier for both the buyers and networks to run revenue-generating campaigns.

How Does It Work?

Using VUKUNET, the entire media transaction process is handled on a common platform of tandem websites. The universal playback engine equates to a software application that runs on any Windows-based PC. It operates independently but in parallel with the digital signage playback software the network operator is already using.

The advertising transaction process is simple. Network operators register on www.VUKUNET.com and profile their network and availability for third-party advertising. Media planning companies register on ADVUKU and use its services to locate and sort networks that meet their audience, timeframe and budget requirements. The media planners can then create an offer that goes directly to networks, stating what they want and what they are willing to pay. Or the planners, more typically, use a request for proposal (RFP) for the cost-per-thousand (CPM) and impressions for networks to accept to get the buy.

The VUKUNET platform is used to schedule campaigns and distribute uploaded and approved ad spots.

Using instructions from a central server, the VUKUNET Ad Player sits in the background while the incumbent digital signage CMS plays its media. Responding to scheduling instructions and mapped to the PC's system clock, the VUKUNET player takes over the full-screen on command and plays out the downloaded advertising content, and then minimizes to the background when its time slot is over. The player does not stop or have any interaction with the network's own digital signage playback engine.

The VUKUNET central platform introduces levels of granularity and advertising media accountability not previously seen in the DOOH sector. At the player level, VUKUNET provides sophisticated device monitoring and reporting tools still uncommon to the sector.

Is this competition for your business partners and companies that have ad planning services?

VUKUNET is a new horizontal service layer that sits above the vertical sectors of the media planning industry, network operators and the scores of software companies that provide CMS for networks. VUKUNET is a technology platform that creates and strengthens the connections between stakeholders across the DOOH industry by enabling advertising campaigns to be scheduled and played back over multiple networks running a variety of CMS packages. VUKUNET complements and enhances the current ecosystem of networks, vendors and aggregated ad sales and planning organizations.

WORKING WITH THE VUKUNET SYSTEMS

How do I get started?

The central web portal is www.VUKUNET.com. End-users don't need to install any management software (except the Ad Player for the actual digital signage players). VUKUNET is where you create an account.

Does VUKUNET require a contract or minimum term?

There is no contract or minimum term with VUKUNET. You can use the platform for as long as you like. Network operators will continue to receive advertising revenue as long as they keep accepting advertising.

How do you plan to get networks signed up?

Thousands of NEC screens are in key vertical markets all over North America. NEC Display Solutions channel and professional teams will leverage existing networks and call on new networks. Also, since we are a channel company, our resellers and distributors will also be signing up networks to get the critical mass that we need for this media. On the advertising media planning side, a direct NEC team is aggressively building awareness and adoption in that community.

Where are VUKUNET's services available?

Currently, VUKUNET is offered in the U.S. and Canada.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

This is a free service?

Yes, the ad serving platform was developed by NEC Display Solutions and is provided at no cost. Costs are recovered through advertising sales with NEC taking a service fee.

As a network operator, what kind of money will this generate for my business?

This depends on a long list of variables, such as the size of your network, audience profile and location. The amount of advertising time made available also directly contributes to the revenue picture. Depending on those variables, a network operator may experience wide-ranging results. Some may see advertising revenues that help or fully offset the capital and operating costs of a network.

Are there incentives for AV resellers and IT integrators to encourage end-user clients to use VUKUNET?

If the integrator already has a relationship with the end-user network and the system is already operating, then their only responsibility is to introduce VUKUNET and its benefits. Once that network signs up on VUKUNET and accepts advertising, the integrator will receive a percentage of the advertising revenue.

If it's a new network, the advertising revenue is in addition to money made from selling, installing and servicing the equipment on the new and growing network.

Are there incentives for other CMS platforms that have clients wishing to use VUKUNET?

Yes, as with AV resellers and IT integrators, the revenue-share model applies to software vendors that introduce clients to VUKUNET and enable the service. Additional benefits come from the opportunity for the network to participate in "multi-network" advertising buys.

Because the VUKUNET Ad Player application will operate on any Windows-based CMS package, networks operating with different packages can now be part of a large advertising campaign spanning several networks, united by the VUKUNET Ad Player as the "common denominator."

What is the payment strategy for partners?

Current solution partners, distributors and resellers are provided with a percentage of the advertising revenue if they get a particular network to start advertising through VUKUNET. The VUKUNET team will handle all central billing and collections functions, web hosting, distribution and reporting, removing what can be time-consuming and costly work from network operators.

TECHNICAL QUESTIONS

What is the technology behind the platform?

Our patent-pending technology is a unique IP developed by NEC Display Solutions. It allows us to send advertising content directly to a screen without any intervention from other software or from the IT staff. The platform is web-based and uses Microsoft's .Net 3.5 application framework.

Did NEC develop VUKUNET, or was a company or its platform acquired and re-branded?

Project Leadership Associates, a Chicago-based Microsoft Gold certified business and technology consulting firm, was engaged to help to build VUKUNET and ADVUKU. At the peak of development, there were as many as 42 software engineers building the user experience and the media player. PLA engineers continue to work on the platform as it evolves, using both experiences and ideas that come in from the user base.

Microsoft remained actively involved in VUKUNET's development effort. The strength of the development team's relationship with Microsoft ensured VUKUNET's build aligned completely with Microsoft's highest standards of software interoperability.

NEC is a technology company. How did you know what to develop for the advertising media planning community?

Detroit-based Campbell-Ewald, a Top 10 U.S. advertising agency, was engaged by NEC to help design – from the agency perspective – the ideal DOOH planning platform. We layered in all of the profiling, targeting and audit information that would be required by Campbell-Ewald and other top media planning houses. We also heavily engaged the larger advertising agency and brand community, as well as used consultants who are sector experts.

The model was then counter-balanced to also address the different needs of network operators.

What do I need to install?

Two components get installed simultaneously – an agent and an ad player. The agent component communicates with the central system to send heartbeats on its status. On a scheduled basis, the agent is initiating a process of taking control of the screen and then returning it to the incumbent CMS once that scheduled time window has finished. The agent is activating a patent-pending Ad Player that utilizes standard components like Windows Media Player and Adobe Flash Player to play media back, according to downloaded scheduling instructions. The agent does its work based on the PC's system clock.

Are there risks of running the VUKUNET player on a PC that already runs a different CMS system and software media player?

Part of the development process for the VUKUNET Ad Player was ensuring it ran independently of the playback engines already being used by CMS providers. The software team tested the player on several mainstream digital signage software platforms in a lab setting and then ran field trials on more units from a variety of providers to ensure stability. That experience was then written into the VUKUNET design, ensuring a smooth and seamless partnership with any current CMS on the machine.

Running multiple applications on business PCs is entirely normal, and extensive testing, along with consultation from and adherence to Microsoft standards, has proven the point.

VUKUNET is developing a certification program to test and provide extensive education on how it lives and operates on the many CMS platforms in the marketplace.

Does the VUKUNET player communicate with the incumbent CMS system on a PC?

The player runs independently and does not talk to the incumbent CMS or coordinate playback. The player only plays full-screen and does not nest in a zone within the CMS.

To coordinate playback, network operators using other CMS systems map to the VUKUNET player activation times against the base CMS scheduling system so no there are no screen conflicts and impression counts are accurate.

VUKUNET can be programmed to work with CMS that create “dynamic playlists” – using ad blocks or slots to ensure 100% advertising playback and flawless network operation.

How does the VUKUNET player communicate?

A simple Internet connection through a standard Port 80 will “pull” informational instructions and media, as well as provide a scheduled “heartbeat” report to the management system.

What information is registered and stored?

Registration requires necessary detail about the network and its traffic, viewing time, programming and demographic attributes. This helps media planners precisely target advertising. We also ask for industry codes and integrate U.S. census data.

How are audiences measured and validated?

The platform follows audience measurement guidelines developed by the Digital Place-Based Advertising Association (DPAA), and VUKUNET applied for accreditation by the Media Ratings Council (MRC), the respected self-regulating body set up to secure for the media industry and related users audience measurement services that are valid, reliable and effective. VUKUNET is set to be the first digital signage technology platform to receive the accreditation.

Are there proof-of-play audits for the paid ads?

Proof-of-performance reports are accessible right from the VUKUNET user's management console.

What are the hardware and installed software requirements for running VUKUNET?

Common:

- Microsoft Windows XP Professional SP3, Windows XP Pro Embedded, Vista SP2 (32 bit only), Windows 7 (32- and 64-bit)
- Port 80 open (inbound and outbound) to the Internet
- Windows Task Scheduler Activated
- Microsoft .NET 3.5 or higher
- DirectX 9.0c or higher
- Windows Media Player 11 or higher
- Internet Explorer 7+ or Firefox 3+
- Adobe Flash Player - current version for digital signage use
- Adobe Shockwave Player - current version for digital signage use
- Sound requires an on-board or PCI or PCIe sound card

Usage-Specific:

VUKUNET Ad-Player on PC with 3rd Party CMS also running

- Processor: Duo Core 1.8 GHz. or Quad Core 1.8 GHz. Or Equal (Celeron and ATOM with integrated graphics not approved)
- RAM: 2+ GB
- Video: Integrated Add-on Graphics Card: 128 MB – 1 GB
- Hard Drive: 120+ Gigabytes

Is there a Linux version of the player?

We will be rolling out a Linux version in mid-2012.

Which Web browser and browser settings do I use?

You can use Microsoft Internet Explorer 7 and greater, as well as Firefox 3.0 and greater. You must accept cookies from this site.

Is there a certification program to test and verify running VUKUNET in parallel with other systems?

Yes, this is in active development and certifications will be issued.

How will technical support be managed if there are technical problems when VUKUNET is running on a system with another CMS?

All networks that are part of VUKUNET will have access to world class after-sales support. If a network encounters a technological problem, they can contact the VUKUNET technical support center. We will troubleshoot the issue to establish if it's related to VUKUNET player. If so, it will be fixed. If they are using a different CMS, we will troubleshoot the issue to establish if it's the other CMS player. If so, we will direct them to their CMS provider.

What kind of training will be provided?

We have developed a large library of tutorial videos that will be available to all users online. We also have our own VUKUNET training that is more business and industry-focused, educating integrators and resellers on the benefits of digital place-based media and how to benefit from using VUKUNET.

Is there an API?

API capabilities exist for EMS interfacing at this time. VUKUNET welcomes the opportunity to further develop API's with other third parties as needed.

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