

▶ Thairath wants to solve digital video rights management with their Thaistringer online platform

YouTube and the Google News Initiative (GNI) introduced Innovation Funding to help news organizations experiment with digital video and build sustainable video operations. As part of the program, a news organization in Thailand, **Thairath**, created an innovative online marketplace that connects freelancers and broadcasters, and helps overcome industry issues around digital video sales and rights management.

News organizations around the world rely on freelancers for raw digital video footage and content. However, the established processes for buying and selling footage is inconsistent, time consuming, and often doesn't allow for advanced digital rights management. But one of Thailand's oldest and largest news media organizations, Thairath, saw a way to address these issues.

Thairath publishes the most widely-circulated newspaper in Thailand and also runs a large TV broadcast arm and online news site, so it's no stranger to the challenges around digital video supply and demand. To help drive the industry forward, it created an online marketplace where independent journalists (freelancers or 'stringers') and news agencies across Thailand can buy and sell original news content, enabling stringers to protect and profit from their copyright.

This centralized platform, an online marketplace called [Thaistringer](#), creates a new standard operating procedure for buying and selling video footage in Thailand. It helps standardize online video rights management and reduce ownership and rights conflicts among media organizations, and empowers freelancers with increased distribution and earning capabilities.

Standardized processes save buyers and sellers time and money

Without a centralized marketplace, buying and selling footage is a complicated and time consuming process. Every single transaction between broadcaster buyers and sellers of original footage is performed on an ad hoc basis, generally offline via a phone call, but sometimes through an email or chat app. Stringers have some negotiating power if they can sell their footage to multiple buyers, but often they will only find a single purchaser, which means less negotiating power and income.

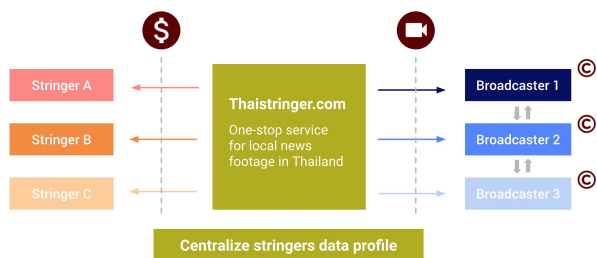
When multiple media organizations buy and use the same footage, conflicts of ownership can occur on digital platforms like YouTube, because only the original rightsholder is able to claim it as their original content. This can lead to protracted and expensive complications for both freelancers and news organizations.

Throughout the whole process, there's little transparency on pricing, no usage report, and very little clarity around who the actual rights holder is. In short? It's a headache for everyone.



Thaistringer would change all that. The platform is a one-stop service for Thai news footage and benefits not only Thai publishers and broadcasters but also global news agencies, publishers, and broadcasters by streamlining the process. Specifically, the purpose of the Thaistringer marketplace is threefold:

- To be an **online meeting place for buyers and sellers** of digital footage — buyers have a wide variety of footage to select from, and sellers can get a competitive price and sell to multiple buyers at once. Both parties can make a transparent and straightforward transaction.
- To **standardize the digital management process** for digital footage captured by stringers — all content on the platform is under the protection of a single rights management system. It helps Thai stringers understand the benefits of protecting their copyright and urges them to adopt new technology to supply the ever-growing demand for online video.
- To **reduce ownership and rights conflicts** among the media organizations on YouTube's platform — publishers can use and upload footage without any copyright conflict issues.



Thaistringer simplifies buying and selling video footage

Development of the centralized marketplace

Thaistringer is the product of an extensive research, development, and testing process. Here are the steps the team took:

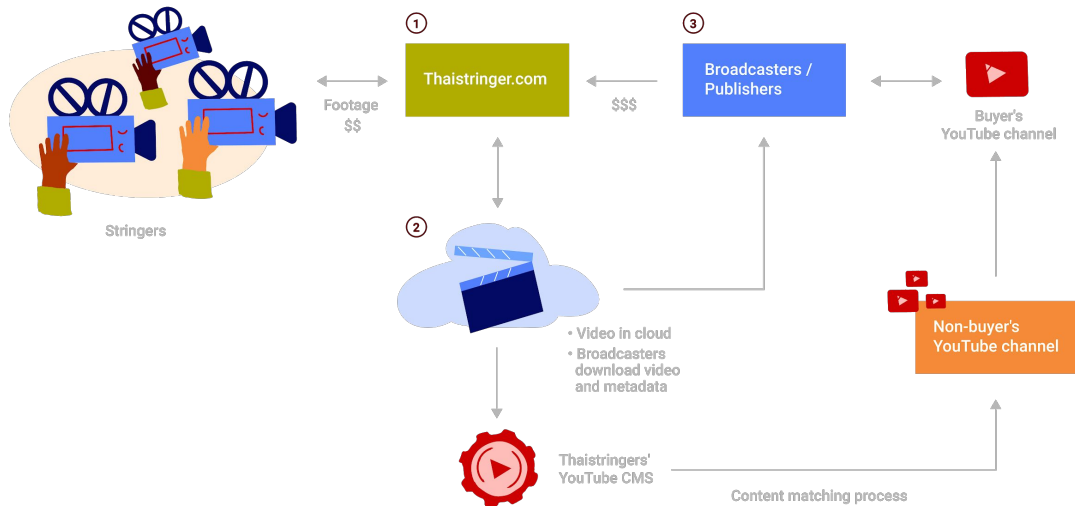
1. Understand the audience: A product is only as good as it is useful, so Thairath initially surveyed hundreds of Thai stringers across Thailand to understand how they currently engaged with news organizations to sell footage. Thairath uncovered multiple pain points: For example, stringers don't have the tools to control asset

usage after it's sold (e.g., some broadcasters might only buy offline rights but then upload to YouTube as well), they are often blind to market rates, so might receive less than the asset is worth, and delays in payment are common. Because Thai stringers tend to avoid new technologies, Thairath also spent a lot of time learning what kinds of features would make their lives easier — such as automated payment and report systems, and unlimited storage so they can submit high-quality files. In addition, the team looked at how other global platforms worked, and spoke with other Thai publishers and broadcasters.

2. Design a user-first platform: Although both buyers and sellers would connect via the same online platform, they had different pain points and needs, so Thairath designed separate portals for each party. The team collated the research takeaways from each side and used those findings as a basis for the website's UI/UX design — for example, they made sure the stringer (seller) side had as few clicks as possible. Once the team developed a beta version, they sent it to several stringers for testing. They also tested it internally with the Thairath newsroom and editorial team, who gave feedback from the broadcaster (buyer) perspective.

3. Select rights management technology: Thairath selected Google Cloud technology to store all the image and video assets, and YouTube's Content ID API for rights management. The Content ID API allows developers to build an application that interacts directly with YouTube's rights management system. Stringers upload their footage to the marketplace, and the footage then sits within Thaistringer's YouTube Content Management System — that piece of raw footage becomes the original copyright asset on YouTube. Broadcaster buyers purchase that footage from stringers for either exclusive or non-exclusive rights, and use it in their own news reports on YouTube. (Note: The YouTube Content ID API is intended for use by YouTube content partners and is not accessible to all developers nor to all YouTube users.)

4. Integrate rights management API: The team developed workflows, which took into consideration things like: How a stringer could upload footage to Thaistringer (which would then be uploaded to YouTube); how news publishers could purchase that footage on the platform; and how Thaistringer could



Footage flow and technical requirements

enforce authorized and unauthorized use of footage. Thairath worked with the YouTube team to outline and design how to integrate the technology so it could leverage YouTube APIs to enable these business processes. This was not without its challenges – for example, the team had to figure out a scaled and automated approach for how to screen authorized and unauthorized usage of a stringer’s footage, which would help reduce operational work for the platform.

Test with users: Once there was a working prototype, Thairath sought input from potential buyers (other big broadcasters). The main feedback was around authenticity of footage and trustworthiness of buyers and sellers. In response, the team added an additional member verification step to ensure that buyers, sellers, and content met high industry journalistic standards. Thairath did a soft launch of Thastringer for about 50 stringers, who are currently testing the platform with Thairath’s subsidiary media companies as buyers.

Encourage adoption on an industry-wide basis:

Thairath is a major player in the Thai media landscape, so a big challenge it faces is getting other media companies to feel comfortable using Thastringer without concerns around competition, confidentiality, or exclusivity. To overcome this, Thairath set up a separate and independent business unit under which the platform was created and managed, called Thastringer. The ultimate goal of Thastringer is to build a platform that will improve standards for Thai freelancers and publishers throughout the industry, regardless of brand or affiliation.

Thastringer exceeds expectations

Thairath has seen great early-stage results with Thastringer. Anecdotal feedback from stringers is that the platform is simple to use and doesn’t require a lot of training – watching a simple “how to” video is enough for most stringers to get started. The platform is mobile friendly, which suits stringers who are on the go, and also offers automated reporting and payment options. Stringers who have used the platform uniformly say that it significantly reduces the pain points and difficulties they have faced in the past.

Thastringer reduces workload on the broadcaster side as well, particularly from an acquisition point of view. The platform simplifies the processes required to buy footage to a few clicks. It also helps business units within broadcasters to work together – digital, print, and TV can all have access to the same footage from the centralized database. Reports are automatically generated, so broadcasters don’t need to create them manually.

Looking to the future, Thairath wants more broadcasters and stringers to sign up. To encourage trial and adoption, it will invite potential buyers to the site and provide them ‘tokens’, which will subsidize the cost of buying footage, so they can test the platform.

Thairath hopes that Thastringer will become the one-stop shop for local and international buyers and sellers of Thai digital video news footage. Ultimately, the platform is a better way to find and pay freelancers for their footage and manage digital rights, thus creating a more healthy and robust news ecosystem.