

Thairath creates an online marketplace for digital news footage to empower freelancers and broadcasters

Thairath is a Thai media organization that was founded in 1950. It publishes the most widely-circulated newspaper in Thailand and also runs a large TV broadcast arm and an online news site.

OPPORTUNITY

Thairath wanted to build a website called *Thaistringer* – a central marketplace for digital video footage, where stringers (freelancers and independent news correspondents) could sell their footage to buyers (major national broadcasters). This would create a new standard operating procedure for buying and selling video footage in Thailand and empower stringers with increased distribution and earning capabilities.

What problem does the *Thaistringer* project solve?

Before *Thaistringer*, the process for buying and selling digital video footage was time-consuming and created confusion when it came to copyright on digital platforms such as YouTube. Broadcasters would purchase clips in one-to-one offline arrangements with stringers. Often, different broadcasters would buy the same footage, and conflicts of ownership occurred whenever they would upload to YouTube. This led to significant operational confusion when broadcasters had to resolve these rights conflicts, as technically the original footage was still owned by the stringer – not the broadcaster.

Thaistringer helps solve this. It formalizes the stringer as the original video rights holder on platforms like YouTube, standardizes online rights management, helps stringers to automatically claim secondary uses of their footage, and reduces ownership and rights conflicts among media organizations.

APPROACH

Thairath set up a new business entity to independently manage the creation and management of the platform. This new unit took a user-centric approach to designing and building the marketplace platform, which is currently in the beta testing stage.

Setting up a new business unit: Thairath set up a new business unit under one of its existing companies to run the project. Thairath created this separate business, under their child company called Triple V, because it wanted to drive the entire news industry forward, as opposed to only advancing its own business interests. New staff were hired to cover media partnerships and administrative and rights management, and the goal is eventually to make *Thaistringer* an independent business unit.

Undertaking research: Before designing and building the website, Thairath wanted to better understand the users it would ultimately be serving, so the team surveyed several hundred Thai stringers to get a snapshot of their current situation, pain points, and see what features they would like from an online marketplace. They also looked at the way other global platforms worked.

Designing a business model and sourcing a vendor: The team took a very user-centric approach to designing the platform. They looked at the key research takeaways and worked closely with the YouTube team to design a value proposition, business model, and offering for both freelance stringers and media companies.

As the online marketplace would leverage YouTube's own copyright-management technology, Content ID, they worked with YouTube to align on policy and technology capabilities. They selected a website vendor to help develop the technology for the marketplace.

Developing the platform: The vendor team then started designing the architecture, user flow, wireframes, UI, UX, etc. and integrating the YouTube Content ID API. This was the most challenging aspect of the software design, so the vendor worked closely with the YouTube team to ensure the rights management system worked on the marketplace platform.

Presenting the platform to broadcasters: Once they had a version of the product with all the key features in place, the team showed it to potential buyers (other big broadcasters) and gathered feedback. The main pieces of feedback were around how to prove authenticity of footage and trustworthiness of buyers and sellers. The team added an additional member verification step to ensure that buyers, sellers, and content met high industry journalistic standards.

Launching the marketplace: Thairath did a soft launch of the marketplace first. About 50 stringers are currently testing the platform with Thairath's subsidiary media companies as buyers. Once any additional kinks are ironed out, Thairath will onboard other news organizations (buyers) and scale up to include more stringers. To encourage adoption by the entire news industry, other publishers and broadcasters will be allowed to first the platform at no cost.

RESULTS

Through a careful research and development process, Thairath oversaw the **creation and beta launch of the Thaistringer platform**, a first for the Thai news industry. Although still in testing phase, **many stringers have registered on the platform and are starting to sell their footage**

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We wanted to step up and use the GNI YouTube Innovation Funding to help fix issues around rights conflicts and claiming in order to raise up our industry standard.
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LEARNINGS

Create a tool that people want to use: Typically, technology adoption by Thai stringers is not high. But for the Thaistringer marketplace to be successful and have a positive impact on the industry, many people have to be using it. The keys to achieving this are: building a user-friendly tool that's easy to use, clearly communicating the benefits of the tool, and getting executive buy-in from major news organizations.

Professional platforms need professional guidelines: Thairath have put safeguards in place to ensure only professional journalists and broadcasters use the platform, and to make certain all footage meets its high industry standards – it doesn't want people to be able to sell unverified/misleading footage on the site. For example, everyone must go through an approval process before they are accepted as a member to the site. In addition, Thairath will look at building in an option for private/exclusive deals to facilitate transactions between parties who have a single, preferred partner they want to work with.

Set prices based on market expectations: It takes time and research to find the right member price for a platform such as this, as the cost needs to match expectations of users. In Thailand, the current industry situation around pricing for digital video footage sees broadcasters and stringers negotiating deals individually, often on a project-by-project basis. Thaistringer would help standardize these transactions – but the pricing model needs to be acceptable to both stringers and broadcasters.