

## Untying that Knot Known as Hollywood

Written by Bob Snyder  
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In legend, the world's most famous knot was "untied" as Alexander the Great (out of either frustration or perspicacity) reached for his sword and in one swift stroke cut through the frustration of the famed Gordian knot. He ended up acclaimed as a hero.

So might Mark Teitell.

Mark is the Alexander the Great of The Digital Entertainment Content Ecosystem. DECE is not exactly the Persian empire but nonetheless a far-flung confederation of major Hollywood studios, consumer electronics manufacturers and retailers, network hardware vendors, systems integrators and other interested parties.



These parties want either to protect the intellectual rights of content-- or find ways to make those holding such rights to feel comfortable about sharing content without getting ripped off.

Teitell faces the modern high tech equivalent of that mythic uber-knot-- the complicated issue of Digital Rights Management. The consortium he leads--in a bold Alexanderian stroke-- intends to create a eco system to enable consumers to share purchased digital content between a domain of registered consumer electronics devices.

Their proposed "digital locker" system is now known as **UltraViolet**.

"...We wanted a name that represents the digital evolution of home entertainment," says a DECE spokesperson. The term "ultra" connotes the "best, fastest and superior" which for DECE points to their brand promise of consumer empowerment. "Ultraviolet" draws connections to the colors outside the visible spectrum – so it speaks to the invisible yet "powerful aspects" of their offering.

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The most powerful aspect of UltraViolet is that it could work...it could set us all free.



Digital technology, the driving force that's bringing us music, voice and video anywhere, anytime anyplace is being held hostage by a Hollywood that appears Luddite to most hardware and device makers.

In defense of Hollywood, and it will be a very short defense, one can say from experience (as witness the publishing business) that "disruptive technology" isn't pleasant from those whose business and livelihood are being disrupted.

If we could only find a way to untie that complicated knot that handcuffs Hollywood from shaking hands on deals with device makers, then digital technology progress could proceed--unimpeded by content's lack of cooperation with hardware and internet folk.

DECE thinks they have that way.

UltraViolet will allow consumers to purchase digital content and watch it wherever, whenever. Consumers who purchase UltraViolet entertainment will have an easy and consistent way to watch film and television content across multiple branded platforms, such as computers, connected TVs, game consoles, smartphones and tablets. The UltraViolet name and logo will help identify content, devices and services from a spectrum of familiar entities – including

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studios, retailers, consumer electronics manufacturers, cable companies, ISPs and other service providers – that will work together.

The consumers will create a free UltraViolet Household Account the first time they purchase UltraViolet entertainment media, and up to six registered Household Account users can share it. When you purchase UltraViolet media-- as Blu-ray, DVD or Internet download-- you get more than a single file or disc: you also get the right to access your content on any UltraViolet device registered in your Household Account (via streaming through devices at home or on the go).

Teitell compares the UltraViolet system to the VISA or MasterCard network where folks anywhere can go to an ATM and access their account.



Ultimately, UltraViolet expects its system (once it takes hold) will extend its influence past rights to ensure that public will only need a single file of the acquired content. (Right now, rights to content still may mean you confront several different types of files for several different types of devices...for example, the same game moving from one brand of game console to another.)

Critics point out that any content consortium of makers, studios, telcos, cable companies, retailers (and all their accompanying lawyers) is like herding cats... and combine that to the difficulty in managing an eco system based on millions of Household Accounts. When these logistical and technical problems are woven together in the same problem, it creates an intricate knot-within-knot.

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Undeterred, DECE found a solution provider to deal with that inside knot.

To create UltraViolet infrastructure, DECE turned to **Neustar**, originally founded in 1996 to meet the technical and operational challenges that arose when the U.S. government mandated local phone number portability or LNP. (As long as Americans remain in the same geographic area, they by law can switch telephone service providers, including VoIP providers, and keep the existing phone number.) Today, long after LNP, Neustar provides many types of many-to-many solutions to complex global communications challenges by enabling connectivity across a myriad of networks, technologies and applications for carriers and enterprises alike.

Think of it like planning a mining mission to the moon. If you want to get there, you hire NASA. Once you get there, you still have to do the mining. But solving transport is critical to free you to do your job. Infrastructure was a "knotty" problem so DECE cut through it in one deft decision.

That frees the DECE members to grow UltraViolet: at CES, they announced a roadmap for introducing UltraViolet content, services and devices to consumers beginning in mid-2011; an expansion to Canada; and the release of technical specs for evaluation by potential licensees.

Grand plans with Hollywood often encompass America and leave the rest of the world out.

**So what about Europe?** Teitell says the UK will be set up this year. He points out some very substantial UK partners have joined DECE: BSkyB, Tesco, BT, FilmFlex, and Lovefilm (just purchased in full by Amazon)...among others.

And UltraViolet could be coming to the rest of the Europe in 2012. Teitell does not confirm this but says only that where UltraViolet goes next after UK will depend upon local reaction and response.

Current DECE members have assets in important markets like Germany, France, and Italy (and therefore a reason to move expediently into those markets). But Teitell also says DECE will be

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prone to reading the market signals.

If retailers, content providers, telcos, cable companies, hardware makers in any particular country respond quickly to UltraViolet, then DECE will be more likely to respond. And that market, promises Teitell, could move faster than others...

That sounds to us like DECE is sharpening its sword to cut through even more knots...

Go [UltraViolet, to partner, to join or to learn more](#)