



Transforming Accessibility

How PFT powered Channel 4's Paralympics 2024 coverage, enabling content distribution from Live to VoD platforms



Client Profile

Channel 4 leads the pack in broadcast services. By fearlessly innovating and taking creative risks, it amplifies unheard voices, celebrates diversity across the UK, and inspires us to see the world differently. With free-to-air content that challenges, entertains, and unites, Channel 4 is where stories spark change and perspectives find their voices.

They have the UK's biggest free streaming service, plus a network of six television channels. Since 1982, when Channel 4 was created, it has been at the centre of national conversations and has been a catalyst for the growth of a world-class production sector in the UK. As a publisher-broadcaster, Channel 4 collaborates with the UK's independent production sector, commissioning content from approximately 300 creative companies across the country each year.

This case study highlights how Prime Focus Technologies (PFT) partnered with Channel 4 (C4) to deliver exceptional live content, successfully meeting the demanding requirements of the 2024 Paralympics. For the Paralympics, Channel 4 required a

significantly increased number of hours of live content each day for 12 days, representing an unprecedented scaling of operations. This was PFT's first Paralympics project with Channel 4, marking a significant test of trust and capabilities.

PFT's technical, operational and project management teams worked closely with Channel 4 to define requirements, optimize workflows, and ensure seamless communication of deliverables. Extensive training sessions were conducted to prepare operators for the heightened responsibilities and ensure readiness for this large-scale project.

Due to the massive increase in the volume of Live to VOD (L2V) content during this event, it was paramount to track progress of all the files at every stage of completion. This meant that new trackers had to be created to ensure no content was missed, and Channel 4 was able to receive real-time status updates at any point, for any programme throughout the event.

Business Context

PFT proposed an ingenious federated approach to address the challenges posed by the Paralympics. Automation through the CLEAR® platform was at the core, streamlining live video processing workflows and significantly enhancing efficiency. Along with live content delivery, PFT undertook comprehensive content management responsibilities, including subtitling, remastering, quality control (QC), and archiving. The project faced several challenges, each requiring tailored solutions to ensure seamless execution:

Scaling Up Operations

Additional real-time events had to be managed alongside existing volumes, with even higher operational quality standards. Rigorous volume testing was conducted in a Dedicated Test Environment (DTE) to ensure the system's reliability under increased workloads, addressing potential bottlenecks well before the live event.

Stabilizing Technical Workflows

Ensuring the stability of Live to VOD (L2V) services and integrating service enhancements required intensive testing and collaboration with Channel 4 to mitigate risks during the live event.

Handling Corrupted Content

Instances of corrupted content during live processing often posed a risk to timely deliveries. Anticipating these issues, PFT's operations team was well-prepared for quick intervention, manually restoring affected files and cross-referencing with alternate versions. This proactive approach minimized disruptions and ensured continuity.

Communication and Coordination

Effective communication was vital given the scale and multifaceted team involvement across various time zones. PFT conducted multiple reviews of SOPs and trial runs to refine communication protocols across email and team channels, to ensure swift issue resolution.

PFT Solution

Tech Preparations

- Ensured stability of Live to VOD (L2V) services through proactive, predictive simulations.
- Completed and tested service enhancements with Channel 4
PFT collaborated closely with Channel 4 to design, complete, and rigorously test a suite of service enhancements tailored to the unique demands of the Paralympics. This included upgrading the Live to VOD (L2V) pipeline to handle significantly increased workloads, integrating advanced automation features, and ensuring seamless compatibility with Channel 4's existing infrastructure. These enhancements were validated through extensive testing and simulations, ensuring they met the required performance standards and could support the high stakes of live event broadcasting.
 - Provided tech support by scaling to multiple parallel events, conducting rigorous testing in the Dedicated Test Environment (DTE) with the Channel 4 team, and successfully achieving the agreed SLA for all 5 events.
 - Successfully executed Live to VOD (L2V), managed a significantly higher number of work orders, and implemented a proactive action plan with a comprehensive support checklist to ensure seamless operations throughout the 12-day event.

Support Readiness

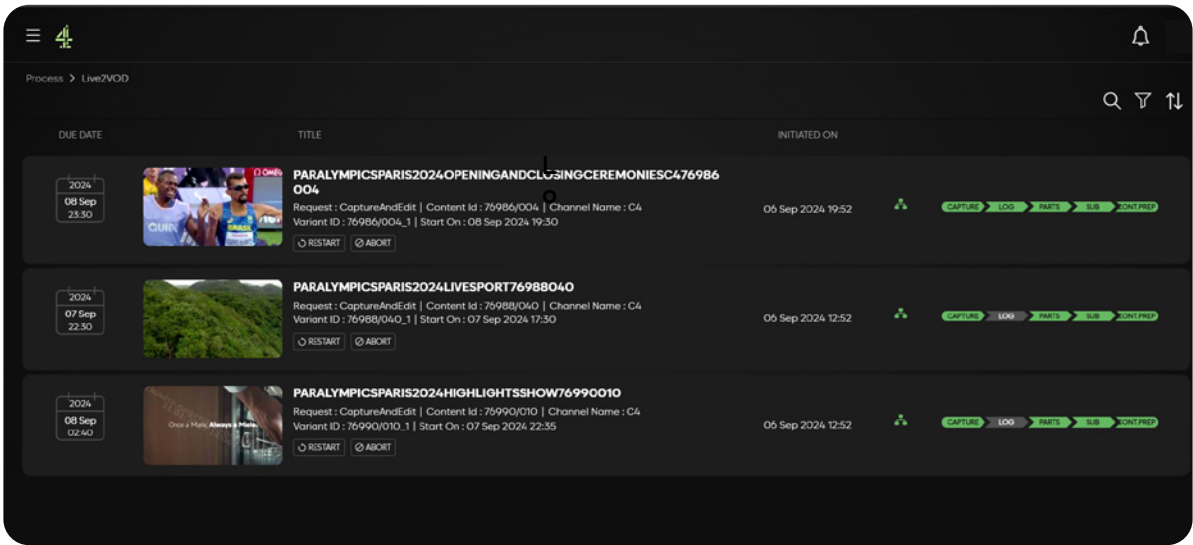
- Conducted multiple SOP reviews with PFT Operations through simulated technical, operational and communication drills.
- Gearing up serving operations for extended loads with new tools and automation.

Execution on Production

- All simulations carried out were put to work on real-time monitoring, with an emphasis on being proactive and predictive
- Timely communication with agreed multiple channels simultaneously
- Daily reporting of achievements and business analytics

Program Governance

- Infrastructure readiness checks from support teams.
- SOP reviews and team rosters finalized for extended hours.
- Test cases were prepared to validate five parallel events.



Benefits

The successful execution of the Paralympics project delivered transformative outcomes for both Channel 4 and PFT:

Reinforced Channel 4's Brand Leadership

By delivering highly accessible and inclusive content, Channel 4 cemented its reputation as a leader in diversity-driven broadcasting.

Proven Scalability and Efficiency

PFT demonstrated its ability to manage a 2715% increase in workload, showcasing operational scalability and precision under tight timelines.

Setting a New Benchmark

Automation via the CLEAR® platform streamlined processes, reducing manual intervention and enhancing overall efficiency. This process is now a standardized approach at Channel 4, allowing Channel 4 to take on future events.

Enhanced Risk Management Practices

The rigorous training, proactive monitoring, and quick issue resolution implemented during this project established a robust framework for handling high-stakes events.

Quantifiable Impact

A substantially higher number of work orders were successfully executed and tracked during the 12-day event, meeting SLAs and achieving flawless content delivery.



“The Paralympics 2024 was a complex technical and operational undertaking, which took months of planning and preparation. PFT really embraced the challenge by providing a great service and delivering hundreds of hours of high-profile content to Channel 4's VOD platforms”

Rachel Yendoll

Head of Content Management, Channel 4

Client Outcome

Channel 4 went above and beyond to ensure the Games were accessible and inclusive for all viewers. For the first time, they offered live audio description and British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation during peak-time sports, alongside live subtitles for every piece of content. With 18 simultaneous streams, 1,300 hours of live sport, and broad coverage across TV, streaming services, YouTube, and social media, Channel 4 provided an unparalleled viewing experience for audiences everywhere.

The 2024 Paralympics collaboration showcased PFT's ability to handle complex, large-scale projects with precision and reliability. Through innovation, preparation, and a focus on quality, PFT not only met but exceeded Channel 4's expectations, delivering a memorable and impactful broadcasting experience.

