Video Hosting and Integration in Drupal

By Justin Emond, Senior Project Manager, Urban Insight
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A summary of options for hosting video in Drupal web sites, from free self hosting to enterprise-level integration and delivery.

Drupal is a powerful open-source content management system that offers many powerful features for building and community web site. However, hosting video in Drupal requires extending Drupal's core capabilities with external modules tools.

There are many options available to integrate video into a Drupal web site. The options range from free public sites to private professional hosting. Before searching for a video option it's helpful to first identify your key requirements.

When evaluating options to host video in Drupal it's important to consider:

1. Budget
2. Data backups
3. Exit options
4. Ease of site migration
5. Player customization
6. Simplicity of user interaction with site

Budget is likely the most important factor when considering your video hosting strategy. It's also important to remember that free or low cost options are rarely free, as support is likely to be needed during the lifetime of the project and will need to be provided by an expert.

When considering **data backups**, remember that if you store the video files on your own system you are likely to need more hard drives on your server than normally would be needed. Whatever tool you use to backup your data will take longer to run (as the video collection grows) and will require additional storage space. In a hosted service, backups are typically provided by the service provider.

It's also important to consider your **exit options**, should you choose to migrate to another platform in the future. Your options to extract and migrate content at a later date from one service to another will vary greatly depending on the particulars of the platform you adopt.

What about **feature set**? Video is (or should be) a simple experience for the user: Play the video, or don't. It's likely that the key requirements for the project will be player customizability and branding.

- Does the project require a custom, themed player designed to match the theme of the site?

- Will a link or logo to the video hosting site be tolerated?
- Should the player try to use the new HTML 5 in-browser player first? (HTML 5, the next version of HTML, includes built-in support for playing rich media files, such as audio and video.)

Lastly, understanding the capabilities of the site editor(s) or administrator(s) who will be adding the video to your website is key to the evaluation process. For example

- Do you want site editor to remain within the Drupal interface for the entire process of adding the video to the website?
- Will the site editor user be comfortable cutting and pasting embed code into a node body in Drupal?
- Where will video editing take place?

Drupal Video Options

Out of the many options available for hosting video in Drupal, we selected four platforms that represent a full spectrum of integration, cost and user experience options:

1. FlashVideo, a Drupal module that provides self video delivery?, with local or Amazon S3 storage options. This options is the most do-it-yourself of the choices.
2. Blip.tv, a video sharing site like YouTube that offers greater privacy control to customers with paid plans. Video is embedded in Drupal and hosted by Blip.tv. This is the lowest cost option (other than FlashVideo with self storage) at $8/month for unlimited video storage and bandwidth.
3. Viddler, an enterprise-level video hosting platform offering fast content deliverability and limited integration with Drupal.
4. Kaltura, an enterprise-level video hosting platform that offers extensive Drupal integration and enterprise-level scalability. This is the most expensive option for video hosting in our evaluation.

Findings Summary

Below is a summary of the primary differentiates between the services.

	FlashVideo	Blip.tv	Viddler	Kaltura
Description	A Drupal module	A video sharing site, like YouTube	A hosted video platform	A hosted video platform
Video storage	On the Drupal site or on Amazon S3	Hosted on Blip.tv	Hosted on Viddler	Hosted on Kaltura
Site editor experience	Integrated upload; user stays in Drupal for single uploads	User uploads video to service and then points Drupal node to video for automatic integration	Integrated recording and upload; user stays in Drupal for single uploads	Integrated recording, upload, import from Flickr/YouTube, editing, bulk upload; user stays in Drupal

Video editing capacity	None	None	None	Yes. Editing performed within Drupal interface.
Player support	Various open source players	Blip.tv player only	Viddler player only	Kaltura player only
Player customization	Varies; some players offer full customization	Light branding	Light branding	Full; player source code available
CDN[1]	Yes, if hosted on S3	Yes	Yes, Edgecast	Yes, Limelight& Akami
Supported Drupal versions	4+	5+	6	5+
API	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
HD videos	Yes	Yes	Yes (beta as of 2010)	Yes
Support	None (self)	Email only	Email, telephone	Email, telephone
Exit options	Download from S3 or server via FTP	Individual file download from web site interface	Download from dashboard	Download from dashboard
Pricing Model	Free if self-hosted; Approx $0.01 - 0.15 per GB for Amazon S3	Free; $8/month professional plan for unlimited storage and bandwidth	~$100/month for 50GB traffic (includes up to 50GB storage)	~$200/month for 100GB storage & traffic
Other plans	10TB-500TB	Only 1 paid plan	50GB- 5TB	100GB-10TB plans

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[1] CDN stands for "content delivery network", which is an approach to video hosting where you distribute servers around the world so viewers can load videos faster from severs that are physically close to them.

Screenshots

Figure 1: FlashVideo offers a standard file upload form to import video into your site (Source: ReportingOnHealth.org)

Figure 2: Blip.tv offers multiple ways to upload video into your site (Source: Blip.tv)
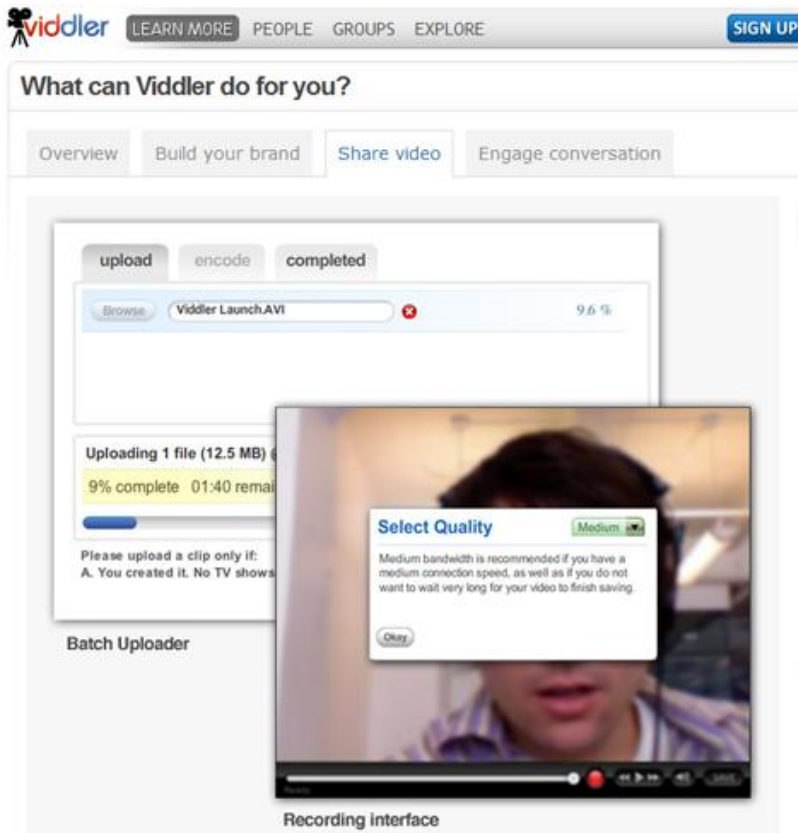
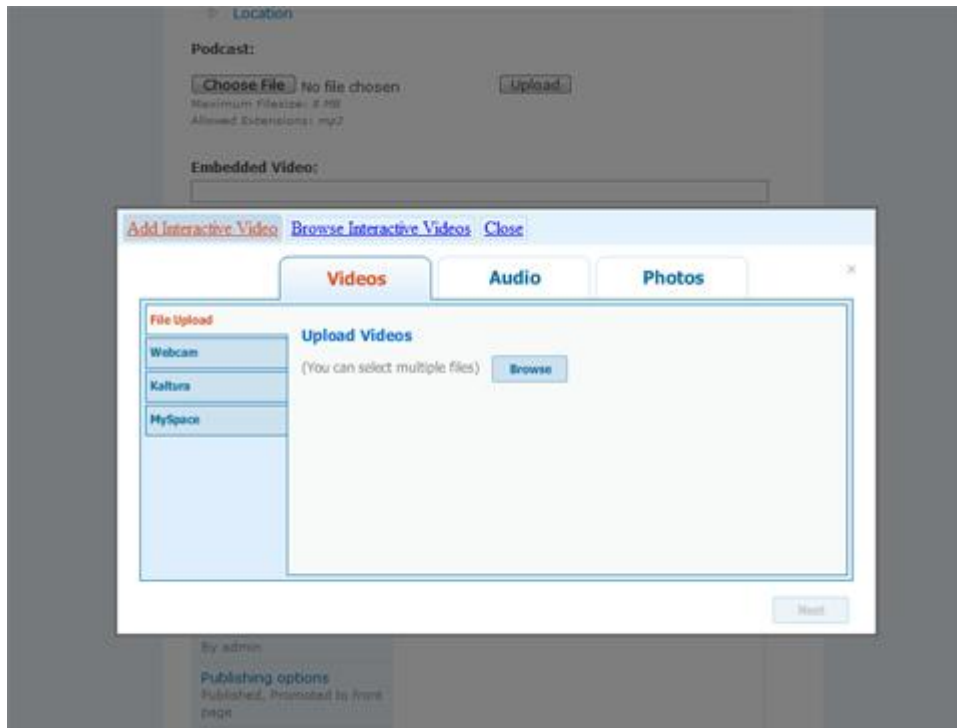**Figure 3: Viddler bulk upload tool (Source: Viddler.com)**

Figure 4: Using the Kaltura Drupal module users can upload video files directly to Kaltura for later conversion without leaving your site (Source: Kaltura Drupal module)

Justin Emond is a Senior Project Manager at Urban Insight and a Drupal module contributor. Urban Insight, a Los Angeles-based web development firm, offers Drupal consulting.