

MediaWen

“Bridging Language Barriers” - this is MediaWen’s promise. Equipped with the tools of artificial intelligence and cloud computing, this young company (founded in late 2014) automates the tasks of translation, subtitling and dubbing video, and aspires to become a European champion in the field.



Erwan de Kerautem (in white, on right), co-founder and CEO of MediaWen, receives the Grand Jury Prize of the French Tech Tour India 2017 from the French Ambassador to India, Alexandre Ziegler (left)

MediaWen is a French company specialized in the design of software solutions and dedicated to the accessibility and translation of video content for broadcast, business, training and gaming. It automates and industrializes postproduction tasks: transcription, multilingual subtitling and dubbing.

MediaWen grew out of an encounter between Erwan de Kerautem and Philippe Anel; the company name is a portmanteau, joining the concept of media to the Breton word awen (meaning muse, inspiration). Erwan was a cultural attaché in Los Angeles before becoming a director and producer of

institutional videos for international organizations such as the Red Cross. He regularly needed to localize his videos, making them available in various languages. Philippe was an IT security specialist experienced in working for American and Israeli companies: together, they began to develop automation tools for subtitling. While attending NAB - the annual broadcast technologies show in Las Vegas - they realized that their solution was one step ahead of the game, and decided to create their own company with a third, American, partner, Marie Bardin. These three were then joined by Jean-Michel Billaut, founder of the Atelier BNP-Paribas and an authority and eminence

grise on new technologies. The company signed its first partnership with IBM - followed by others with Microsoft, Google and Amazon, whose artificial intelligence tools were put to work on voice recognition, automated translation and synthesized voices. MediaWen has developed its own machine learning, neural network and language processing technologies.

Transcription, translation, subtitling, dubbing

Three and a half years later, MediaWen is marketing a software suite capable of meeting three types of need: video subtitling in the original language (for the hearing- ■■■



Philippe Anel, co-founder and CTO

■■■ impaired, or for online publication of a video without sound, including generation of the metadata that enables search engines to find that video); translation and subtitling in another language, and translation and dubbing using a synthetic voice. The five languages already operational (French, German, English, Spanish and Portuguese) are soon to be joined by five more, currently in development: Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Hindi and Arabic.

The bulk of MediaWen's work has been for e-learning providers, major accounts such as Société Générale, and a professional social network, for short-format multilingual videos. Customers upload their videos to the MediaWen platform and in return receive either text

files containing the subtitles, or the video complete with its subtitles in place.

At the start of each collaboration, the MWBench compares the various speech recognition and automated translation tools (from Google, IBM, Microsoft, Amazon, etc.), on test videos, so as to select the one best suited to a given language and content type, and that best meets this or that need: generation of metadata, subtitle quality, etc.

Available via an SaaS (Software as a Service) platform, the solution is economic in its use of resources (hosting, bandwidth, etc.) because it separates the image file from the audio file. This means that to broadcast a video in 15 languages, you only need to process a single video file, and generate 15 sound files. MediaWen is also very security-

conscious, allowing customers to put together a team using tightly-defined access rights. Lastly, all data is hosted in Europe - mainly with OVH.

CSA-compliant subtitles

MediaWen also has its sights firmly set on the media, broadcast and entertainment market, and will have a stand at the upcoming IBC2018 (media, entertainment & technology show) in Amsterdam, 13 to 19 September. For this particular market, MediaWen's product is on offer in API mode via integrators - in other words, a programming interface is made available to developers within client companies, enabling them to integrate it to the architecture of their own video management systems. At the IBC, it will announce a partnership with Brazilian service provider ShowcasePro - supplier of subtitling and teletext solutions. ■■■

Benchmark

Founded: late 2014. **Co-founders and associates:** Erwan de Kerautem (CEO), Philippe Anel (CTO), Marie Bardin, Jean-Michel Billaut. **Head office :** Paris.

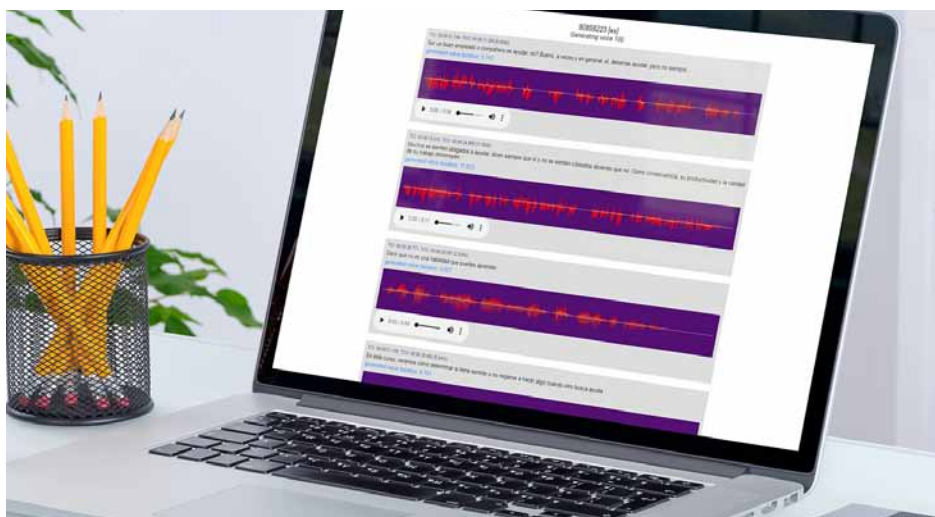
Permanent staff: 5+ and 15 to 20 freelance developers.

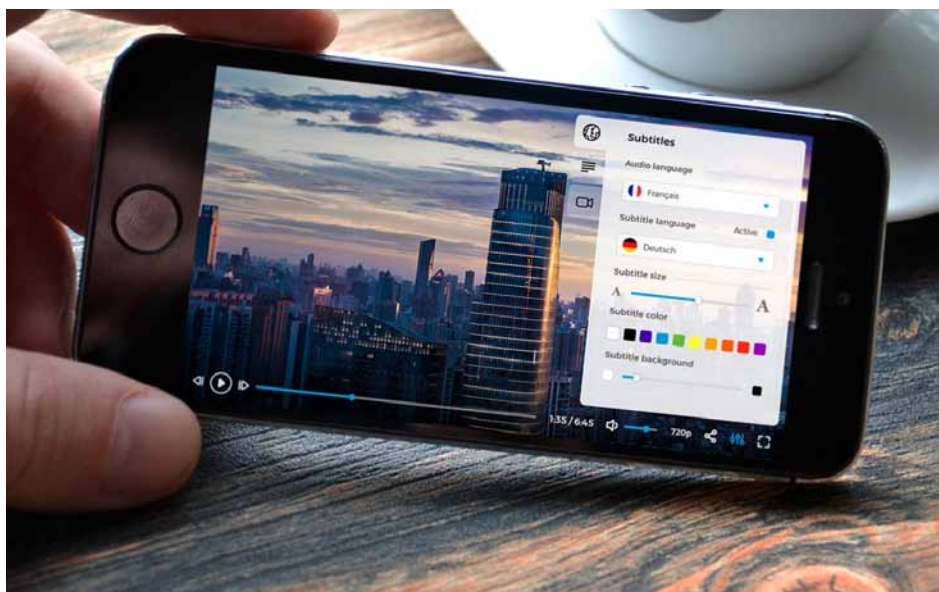
Activity: development of a software suite for voice recognition, automatic transcription, translation, subtitling and dubbing of videos in French, German, English, Spanish and Portuguese. Languages currently in development: Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Hindi and Arabic.

Business model: billing based on usage of access to the platform in SaaS mode (depending on the number of videos processed, language, duration, etc.) or on the sale of licenses for integration of the programming interface (API) to the client's own system.

Turnover: < 1 M€.

Website: mediawen.com





MWPlay, MwBot et MwHub, various software packages marketed by MediaWen.

MediaWen has also reached an agreement with an Indian tech partner.

“Our algorithms are able to closely configure subtitle parameters, including number of lines, number of characters per line, display position within the image, recognition of perspective changes, duration between two subtitles, etc. They allow us to meet the requirements of both the French CSA specification for subtitling for the hearing-impaired and those of American legislation, which is extremely restrictive in terms of accessibility”, explains Erwan. “Our tools are also able to check subtitle compliance with Netflix rules, for distributors and producers who are selling their programmes to that platform.

And for dubbing, the quality of the synthetic voices is now so high that you no longer ‘hear’ the machine”. Automated dubbing is currently becoming operational for voice-over - on documentaries, for example. “We are making progress on the automation of lip movement detection, for lip-sync. Automatic dubbing of live sequences is currently only possible where a written script exists.”

MediaWen vs Mediawan

David and Goliath. MediaWen bears almost exactly the same name as Mediawan, a media sector investment company set up by Xavier Niel (Iliad), Matthieu Pigasse (LNEI) and Pierre-Antoine Capton (Troisième Œil Productions). A close proximity likely to lead to confusion, given MediaWen’s presence in the audiovisual sector.

The start-up company referred the matter to the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO), which ruled in its favor on April 23, 2018. The court noted that, in addition to the prior registration of the MediaWen trademark, the two names are too similar (in terms of both business sector and logo), leading to a risk of confusion. The EUIPO stopped short of prohibiting the use of the Mediawan brand but considers that it should be limited to investment fund and financial communication activities. To be continued...

The latest addition to the MediaWen suite is Wendi - a “multilingual video chatbot” still at the prototype stage. Wendi is able to chat in real time, using voice recognition and artificial intelligence, with potential applications in retail, gaming or health, for example.

At a time when audiovisual stakeholders are facing unprecedented upheaval, with cut-throat price competition in an increasingly global market and many dubbing and subtitling projects now being carried out in India, Erwan de Kerautem hopes for the emergence of a

major European player in the sector, boosted by the use of automation tools... like those of MediaWen. ■

Isabelle Repiton