CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT WEBINAR

FEATURING: **miG**

TRANSCRIPT

Stephen:
So today, we're really excited to introduce you, and if you haven't already met Mark but I'm really just excited to jump over here and introduce you to Mark Harris. So real quick, welcome Mark. How are you doing?

Mark:
Thank you. Glad to be here.

Stephen:
Awesome. Let me just kind of set Mark up for a little bit. So Mark works with a group called Multi Image Group or MIG, and they're down in Boca Raton, and Mark's going to talk a little more about that in a little bit. But Mark, the journey with Mark and Shoflo is actually I think, well it's actually older than even two years ago.

Stephen:
I think they've been using Shoflo give or take for the last year or two, and then Mark and some other people there at MIG actually found us through another software called ShoPro that we ultimately were able to inherit and bring into Shoflo's world. So they've always been a company that's leaning forward trying to figure out the best ways to deliver excellence for their customers.

Stephen:
So that's why we got them here. The outline and the topics for the day is basically a little bit about MIG, a little bit about Mark and then just really how does a company of that scale, which is really again, just a premier production agency, how do they deliver that routine day in, day out with and without Shoflo in terms of how do they come about that and how do they do that. So again, real quick, just welcome Mark, and thanks very much for joining us here today.

Mark:
My pleasure, thanks for having me.

Stephen:
So, Mark, I guess just to kind of kick us off, I like to ask this question, you know, a minute or two but just kind of tell me, how in the world did you even fall into this world of production? Right? Your sitting here, you're in a spotlight, you're clearly doing some stuff right, how did you even get here? Kind of just what's a little bit of you all's a journey? Or your individual journey.

Mark:
Yeah, the 30-second version is I had a real interest in technical theater in high school, and no one could make me stop that. So I kept being interested in that, and I had the opportunity, and I'm not going to date myself by telling you the date, but I had the opportunity to participate as a high school student in a Superbowl that was being the half time show being put on by Walt Disney Productions.

Mark:
And that got me really fully into it. I loved it; I wanted to be part of it. I wanted to be part of that mix, and when I got out of high school and went to college, I worked as a Disney College intern. Some people may be familiar with that program. I worked as a college intern for my entire time in college, summers, and Christmases every chance I got.

Mark:
I went back to the theme parks, where I was part of the show services team. Audio, lighting, video, stage management. So I came up in that whole world of Disney production. I got out of college, went to work directly for Disney, spent almost ten years in the theme parks and got out of that a while back, and went into the corporate world of doing live event production on the corporate side.

Stephen:
Awesome. That's good fun. That Disney era of lives and corporate production they had a pretty big impact on it. I actually came into it afterward right after they closed it down internally, and it all went out to outside groups. But a lot of the guys that are in the corporate industry came from Disney there originally.

Mark:
A whole lot of them, yeah.

Stephen:
So out of Disney and all that kind of stuff you got into what, just corporate AD, right? Production and kind of what was your journey there in terms of the types of productions you've been exposed to over the last how many years, 20 years?

Mark:
Yeah, exactly that. About 20 years in the live event corporate production industry. I started a little bit more on the DSA, the Direct Selling Organization side, and spent many years staging conventions, conferences all over the world. Some really large events for tens of thousands of people and some smaller boutique events.

Mark:
So I had the opportunity to travel all over the world in corporate production, being both a producer and a show caller and getting to see some of the largest I think events. Some of the largest corporate events that are staged every year have been staged every year. I've been fortunate to be a part of it. So it's great to be a part of the industry, it's really evolving and growing, and it's been an exciting journey.

Stephen:
It has even just since I've been in it. It's changed a lot moving from the world of slide projectors on the left and right and all that kind of stuff to super-wide screens, which was really just we're all trying to figure out how to blend these projectors together now really with Pandoras and the

spiders and all that kind of stuff. The ability to just map and move stuff all around the room is pretty awesome. I know MIG's on the front end of a lot of that stuff.

Mark:
Yep.

Life before Shoflo

Stephen:
Well cool. So you're a producer, you're a show caller. You've been a show tech, you've been in all of it. Talk about moving it into a little bit more of the workflow direction. What's been your experience? What were you doing in life before Shoflo? What was your way of doing it?

Mark:
I mean, I think like a producer and a show caller we all struggle, we have struggled over the years with this concept of how do you create a run down? How do you keep the crew on the task on that run down, and how do you make it not a painful experience for everyone?

Mark:
I started out the way I think most people did, using Excel Spreadsheets. I created my own custom template, which I'm sure a lot of people do that had all the columns and all the formulas in it just the way I wanted it.

Mark:
And it's funny, I probably did that 15, 20 years ago and I have seen that template make it's way out into the world and come back to me through other producers, through other technicians, and so everybody was looking for a way to do it and looking for a way to do it efficiently, but within the Excel format as I'm sure many people know it's not flexible, you can't share it in real-time.

Mark:
It's really hard to update on the fly, and we're always printing new Shoflo's. So I came through that whole experience of working in Excel and trying to perfect that Excel spreadsheet and I had my spreadsheet and I had all my formulas plugged in, and you know, it got to the point with that spreadsheet whereas a producer and a show caller when the client wanted to make a change, even when it was a change that was best for the show, it made perfect sense.

Mark:
You had a little bit of a groan inside because you're thinking to yourself, wow well okay, now I have to go back and update that spreadsheet, print it, and get it out to everybody. So when collaborative online software-based programs first became available, I was in.

Mark:
So we tried ShoPro for a little while, and that had its limitations, and there was resistance to it because it wasn't as reliable as we really needed it to be.

Mark:
So there were a lot of people who wouldn't give up the paper and as you and I know there's still a lot of people who won't give up the paper today.

Mark:
But when we found Shoflo and with all the refinements that have been made in Shoflo over the years, we've really found it, I've personally found it to be a rock-solid platform I can count on, and it's so flexible.

Mark:
It's really changed my ability to create show rundowns, to create scripts. To modify them on the fly and to keep the client in the loop and the rest of the crew in the loop the whole time.

Stephen:
Well, and it's funny even just looking at this photo you don't ever really get away from paper, but you can to varying degrees, start shifting some of them away. I was thinking while you were talking, and that's still a space I want to keep solving for at Shoflo is just the cobble head.

Stephen:
A lot of this comes from if the end in meeting planner is in a particular table-based workflow and their generating version after version on that end and then that's coming to you it's really the producer and the show caller's responsibility to transpose that into something that your crew can understand.

Stephen:
Because it's often that it's coming to you guys as a producer looking like something that I don't know, corporate 5,000 people might sit around in a meeting talking about, but it doesn't look like what it needs to be for your crew. So that's kind of like initially where the intersection of Shoflo enters in. Talk to me about that. What's your approach to when do you begin working on Shoflo in your overall production workflow?

Mark:
I've thrown out the Excel spreadsheets. So I start working in Shoflo immediately, and as you pointed out, that doesn't mean the client starts working in Shoflo immediately; they don't. So it's been my experience that I start building in Shoflo immediately the minute I receive an Excel spreadsheet from the client or the minute I receive a Word document with a rundown of the show I start building that Shoflo template right away.

Mark:
And I don't always share it with the client right away because I think they sometimes get the feeling that we are forcing them into one method of doing things or that it might be less flexible than the method they're currently using.

Mark:

But I do share it with the crew chiefs, with the heads of the departments who are involved with the show immediately so that they can start to see how the show is being built and eventually when the client feels like they have 70% their scripts, 70% their rundown I'll begin to share that with the client so they can live collaborate. So they can online collaborate in the process.

Stephen:

So when you're talking about sharing, you're actually inviting them in as users, giving them editing permission?

Mark:

It does depend on the client. Some don't want to be involved to that extent, and they say just send me a guest pass or send me something I can view what you're doing in. And other client production personnel are more than happy to get in there and make their edits, and I'm comfortable with that because I know there's a revision history. I can always see what they did, and we can always collaborate through that process.

Shoflo On-Site

Stephen:

So we're going to take a look at what one of mark's rundowns looks like in Shoflo in just a second. Before we get there with some of these pictures, talk about adoption, crew, how in this picture it looks like it might be the spider pre-set guy or some sort of Barco switcher has got Shoflo over on the left. How is it actually fitting in on-site? And how are you inviting your crew into adopting Showflo?

Mark:

Yeah, that's a great question. I think MIG is a forward-looking company, so the adoption of Shoflo here has not really been that difficult. When we presented the program, we showed what it could do. We gave people a real overview of its flexibility.

Mark:

We held classes right here on-site for all of the traveling crew and technicians and people that would be involved, and we tried to get engagement right away. We tried to get people excited and involved in how we were going to roll this out. And by and large, that's been really successful.

Mark:

With that being said, as with any organization, there are some people who have been doing this so long and so professionally and so well that they have their way of doing things, and some of them do prefer paper. Or at least prefer paper for part of the process.

Mark:
So we've tried to be flexible enough to have Shoflo be an integral part of what we're doing, but we're not going to shame you or make you feel any less if you'd like us to preview a PDF on site.

Mark:
And the other thing that I really like about Shoflo is when we go on show site when I'm on show site I may not always be working with a core group of technicians that are full-time employees of the company or that I know very well.

Mark:
We may have freelancers on-site, and it's really easy for me to add their email, send them a link to Shoflo, give them the correct permissions and give them a five minute tutorial of how they need to use this on their laptop or iPad.

Mark:
And I'm amazed at the number of people that we do meet today that are freelancers who haven't been exposed to Shoflo, but when they see it when they see me running through the Shoflo, and they're tracking me through the rundown they love it, and they're like, "I didn't know this existed." So it's been fun.

Why we started Shoflo

Stephen:
When you were talking there, and I'll start to switch gears over to the Shoflo but when you were talking there for a second it reminded me, it is a true thing, like even when I used to direct cameras for corporate events like MIG sometimes, you get a rundown and all I want to do is just get a giant red sharpie and circle the videos because from a material level that's all that really blows my rollout.

Stephen:
But then other times I'm making really nuanced notes on my sheet of paper, right? On my printed version you've got because it's a more complex show or whatever it is and that's when I've found that Shoflo can be helpful too is when you don't have to come to drop a new version of the rundown on day two of rehearsals after someone really invested personally into making notes, highlighting things. Whatever their annotations are, that makes it what they need for it to be successful.

Stephen:
Every new version essentially just obliterates that, and that's a problem, and that's kind of a big reason that we set out to do Shoflo.

Mark:

And that's exactly right about that reliance on paper tends to reduce in direct proportion to the number of changes that we're making to the Shoflo as the show goes on. So the technician that originally said just, "Print me a PDF." May, by day three of the rehearsal process, say, "Get me on the Shoflo." I can't keep making these revisions.

Stephen:

We find that pretty often. We find new, first time events for customers or even users, they'll start with the old, and then they'll start looking over. Once they get through the hardest part of setup and tech and all that, maybe a day of rehearsals and they have a little bit of time to breathe they'll be like, what's going on over there?

Stephen:

And they want that because at the end of the day there's a fork that happens as soon as you print and distribute a version of a copy. Mark's going to be back there, or XYD producer's going to be back there and adding all sorts of edits to it, and you have delayed that information until the next printed point, or you're on a real timepiece of software like Shoflo.

Stephen:

Well, that's awesome, man. Let's dive in. So, Mark, we can't show all the stuff at MIG do, I mean sensitive to all the types of events and customers that they use. We've prepared this one, so we're just going to start here at the event dashboard level. But Mark, if you want to just kind of walkthrough and just describe what I'm looking at here, just kind of hierarchy and again how you guys kind of start building in Shoflo.

Mark:

Yeah, and every producer I know has their own way of doing this, so you're really looking at my version of doing this. But MIG starts out with templates. So we have templates that we've already created that we believe have all of the elements necessary to build your show, and those templates are easily accessible on our Shoflo MIG site. And so producers start with those templates and begin to build their show.

Mark:

I separate my show generally into days. You can see that here and then into sessions that are on those days, and there you have a rehearsal schedule down at the bottom, and if you click on that, you can see that I also use Shoflo to keep track of the rehearsal schedule and this has really been a great addition.

Mark:

So it's not just the show calling itself, it's not just the rundown of the session but keeping track of an ever-changing rehearsal schedule with the client in Shoflo oh my gosh how easy it is to move the 10:00 block to 11:00 block if that's what happened. Or to move lunch or dinner or move any rehearsal in the flow somewhere else to a different day.

Mark:
So we keep the rehearsal schedules inside Shoflo, and I'm not sure if you back out back to that page, I'm not sure if you have the version that says no, but sometimes I will often put on here look here first.

Stephen:
Where do you do that?

Mark:
I get a lot of questions from the crew will say, "Well, what is the rehearsal schedule for tomorrow?" Or "When is the crew break today?" And so I will sometimes put a big annotate, a big, bold thing on the rehearsal schedule that says, "Look here first." Because I want the crew to know that most of their questions are easily answered within the Shoflo.

Stephen:
I love that. So yeah, just for people, so most people are familiar with Shoflo or have used or are looking into it for really the rundown, which is the Ferrari of Shoflo. But this one's often overlooked, which is the schedules or the grids and again it's the ability to come in, and you're either going to build a show which is your show flow, a run down minute by minute.

Stephen:
But the schedules and lists are really designed more for your hour by hour, 30 minute blocks things like that but same problem. Fifty different versions leading up to any given show, so I love that MIG and Mark have taken off. Well, let's jump into a show Mark and just kind of walk me around the bases what am I looking at here? What does this look like?

Mark:
So you're looking at my version of setting up columns, which from left to right, you can see what columns I prefer to use. I like to pull all of the columns that I'm looking at most often to the left side of the screen, which I'm sure a lot of people do so that I don't have to scroll.

Mark:
I usually do this exclusively on my laptop screen; I'm using a 15 inch MacBook Pro. I don't generally use an external monitor for Shoflo because I have a lot of other external monitors in front of me, and I have to have someplace to see the stage. So I generally keep it all on the laptop.

Mark:
I'm a big fan of Shoflo's ability to color code. So you can see that I've color-coded. I think this is graphics purple. Audio cues are all in green; there are some entertainment acts that appear in yellow. If there's a particular thing like you can see roll records in there that absolutely must not be forgotten, it's in red. And the other thing that I love about Shoflo is that it gives me the ability to put photos and video links in it.

Mark:

So one example is you can see in that yellow line it says video link under presenter and title and what I would use that for is if there's an entertainment act, probably not YouTube but as an example, if there is an entertainment act that I know that the camera folks or the video TD or perhaps other members of the team have not had a chance to see it at rehearsal I'll throw down a little video link in there so that they can take a look at what to expect from that act.

Mark:

A lot of times in the corporate production world, we're working with acts that might have come from America's Got Talent or one of those other types of shows where we can see clearly on a video what it is that they're going to do on our stage. So it really helps for us to throw those little video links in there so the crew can visualize before the event. What that act is going to look like. Great for the lighting people as well.

Stephen:

Real quick on that, Mark. Just note I'll walk people through how that would happen. So, for example, you could go to Dropbox, I'll just go to their main website, but you could go to the unique URL assuming that the user has access to it and then yeah, it's just as simple as selecting the cell you want. There's a little link icon up here, and you can just paste that URL, and you can even call it what you want.

Stephen:

So I could be like this is the opening video v4. Insert that link, and now that's in. I think the green background, let's change its color. Yep there you go. And now that gives that playback pro operator the ability to... They get set up, they get Shoflo going, and as soon as they get their environment set up, they can literally just go through the rundown and click link after link and actually download those videos. Of course, you can always do it over Media Drive as well, too, but just an option there.

Mark:

Yep.

Stephen:

Cool, keep rocking.

Mark:

And then I will use pictures like this lovely picture we have of Bill Gates in here. I will throw a picture in of the presenter and title column along with that presenter's title, and I really do that for two people primarily. I do that for the A2 because he or she is the person backstage tasked with finding and micing this person in what's probably a chaotic environment.

Mark:

So when I am asking is Bill mic'd up the A2 has some references for who Bill might be standing around backstage. And then I also really love it for panel discussions where there are six panelists, and I'll put all of their pictures in there.

Stephen:
That's a cool idea.

Mark:
Yeah, so that the video guys know, camera guys know who it is that we're referencing. What does that person look like when we say, "It's Bob, and he was supposed to be in chair three, but he moved to chair five on his own." So having some reference to what those people look like has been really helpful.

Stephen:
And real quick just to demonstrate that real quick, a fun one I'm not sure if most people know, but you can actually just use an image URL from the internet. So, for example, I'll just roll along with the tech giants. Copy image address, come back over to Shoflo; we'll try to the panel approach here that Mark was just talking about. So you're just going to click the image up there, past that URL, insert the photo, and there we go, we've got both of them. So there's an option right there.

Mark:
And what's great about Shoflo is I never really worry about how big these cells get. Because I'm not going to print it in most cases and if I do print it, I can exclude the pictures from the print file.

Stephen:
Real quick Mark, I've got a Q and A question I wanted to hit just as the kind of come in. One person was curious to do you have an overall production schedule in Shoflo or just the rehearsal schedule?

Mark:
Right now, for me, it's just the rehearsal schedule. I'm not keeping the production schedule in Shoflo primarily because the production schedule often starts with a document that's created by the client and they prefer to continue to use that document all the way through the production process, and it would be too difficult to wean them off of that I think. But that's my take on that.

Stephen:
We have seen just for context, ones where people build every column as a day and can kind of do a week at a glance. I think like Mark was saying, the more you add into that, the more it's going to... Well whatever, more but if it's just simple things like hey we do know there's a GS rehearsal at this point, you can kind of have that or we know lunch breaks are this, and it's just a helpful thing because again your crew is going to be in this view right here and they're going to just pop back and forth between GS day ones and rehearsal lists, and that's kind of the value of having it all under one spot. So okay, let's keep rocking there, Mark. You were just kind of starting to walk us through colors and images and things like that.

Mark:

So like I said, color coding is big for me. I usually make videos are all color-coded blue. If you scroll down, you can see videos that are in there, and then I'll always throw in a column that notes what is the source of that video or graphic which you can see in my columns. It says playback X or red.

Mark:

Same thing for audio. Great column flexibility allowing me to note where the graphics works are or what file it is specifically that the graphics operator is looking for. I have columns for, as most people do, for audio, lighting, video the various surfaces, whether it be screens or LEDs.

Mark:

I keep a column for staging, which is generally the movement of furniture props and things like that around the stage. And then a spider presets column which you can see all the way on the right there and of course you can order this any way you want.

Mark:

So you're just looking at my quick snapshot of the way this is done. For me, when I'm on show site, I keep Shoflo running obviously on my laptop right in front of me. In a picture that you showed earlier, you might have also seen that I had it running on an iPad sitting next to me.

Mark:

That's not the one with Shoflo on it, but that's similar. I think that's maybe it. So I'll run a couple of different instances of Shoflo at the same time maybe so that I have the flexibility to move things around to look at different views of Shoflo to collapse columns. So I really like that about it.

Mark:

I will also create some fail-safes for myself honestly. Nothing is 100% bulletproof, so before a session begins I'll print out a PDF of that particular session, and I'll usually slide it right under my laptop, and in the many years of doing this that we've been using Shoflo, I can honestly say I have never slid that PDF out from under my laptop but it's there if I need it.

Mark:

I set up my Shoflo screen kind of the way you see here. I have multiple timers on-screen, Shoflo open, I'm using timers inside Shoflo as well. I have graphics; I have a multi-view on the right there that's showing me cameras, playback, and all of those things.

Stephen:

Yeah, real quick on some of that stuff, Mark. I think understanding even our view on the subject of redundancy it's a big thing in production. You don't just do a single projector, and you need two, right? And that's for a lot of reasons, and it's mostly because everyone's been burned. We really totally believe in where the direction of technology's going and the internet and all that sort of thing.

Stephen:

We've seen massive moves in that even in the last few years. That being said, we're also trying to be realistic, and so we've never really said that Shoflo's like, if you're printing paper, it's a fail whale or something's not working in your workflow, that's just not true.

Stephen:

For us, if we can get it from 20 printed versions over the course of three or four rehearsal days down to one maybe before the show, maybe one to kick it off, that is huge. But we want you to enter into every show, every live environment with what you need to feel like you can survive it. The Internet's just one of the things we always have to figure out in a live environment. Power's there, all that kind of stuff.

Stephen:

To that end, in Shoflo, and I'll even do it on his real quick. The areas that we give for those redundancies are basically this. The internet goes down; we just kind of put a little message here that says, "Looking to reconnect." But the rundown doesn't disappear from you, and that's an important thing to be aware of. So even in a live environment, if you had intermittent internet, you can keep cruising and engaging; you're just going to lose some things like the live tracking, which we'll talk about in a second.

Stephen:

In addition to that, we have the guest pass, which I think Mark alluded to, but that's a really easy one for everybody who's using Shoflo right before the show just come over here, hit open new tab. Because of that one, once it loads once, it does not ever ask for the internet again. So that one you can just cruise up and down, zoom in, do whatever you want to do. That one's real easy.

Stephen:

That's almost the equivalent of printing an Excel spreadsheet. I guess the only thing that could burn you in this scenario is if you, I don't know, lost power on your computer.

Mark:

Yeah, if your computer crashed.

Stephen:

Yeah, a computer crash, that's a real situation for sure. And then like we had been talking about a little bit here but just the ability to actually generate really get it to whatever you need it to be. PDF, Word, XLS, we're not trying to limit you, we want you to be in whatever format you need for you to be successful.

Stephen:

We just want to help you get there, and then if you've got a nice, safe environment for on-site, then that's really where that tracking and those custom column orders, that's really where that stuff starts to take off. Hey, Mark real quick, I've got a question or two, so let me jump over and

grab those real quick. Okay, so one question was, are you using Shoflo's teleprompter yet? I think we talked about that earlier, not so much, but I'll let you answer that.

Mark:
We have used it. I wish we were using it more honestly, but at the moment, I think it's something that we're learning to use, and we probably need to put a little more effort into our end about learning its capabilities because it seems like a great flexible tool.

Stephen:
Here's a great question and I'll actually on the prompter stuff, we're really looking to make some big improvements in that area too, and we've got a cool video we'll be coming out with here in the next couple of days so look for that to hit. Here's a good question. I like this one. Why do you think it's so difficult to convince production and management teams to give Shoflo a chance in live event environments? That's great; I love that question.

Mark:
Yeah I mean from my point of view I think it is 100% about reliability because you can't break paper and people have been doing it so long that clutching that piece of paper in your hand, circling what you want to circle on it, making your personal notes on it, everybody can rely on that and they feel like it's always going to be there sitting on the desk in front of them.

Mark:
And a lot of people who do this for a living who do it in, I don't know, for lack of a better term high-risk, no-fail environments which I feel like we're all really in. Where you can't fail, you're not going to want to explain to a client why you were not able to advance to the next cue because you couldn't find it on your desktop.

Mark:
So I think that is what makes people reluctant to make the switch, but if you don't try it if you don't have the opportunity to use it, it's hard to demonstrate how it is an adequate and reliable replacement, and you still have paper.

Mark:
So it's all the things that make Shoflo so flexible that really improve the workflow that improve collaboration with both the crew and the client that are all the reasons why you should try it and reliability I think or concern about having a problem should really go to the back of your mind because you can always print the paper. That's my two cents.

Stephen:
Yeah, I think that well the fact that groups like MIG have been able to adopt it across the organization is they're doing it at the premier level, and so we've worked really hard with groups like them to identify what are those areas of resistance?

Stephen:
Thoughts on that would just be... I think the end in the meeting planner, there's room there for them to get excited about it, but it's not always, you know some clients are interested and lean in and look in through the peephole and say, "How does this whole thing come together? Just as production in general. How do the lights come on?"

Stephen:
But then there are some that are very standoffish; they're not interested in that, they just want the production company to just kind of automagically make it all set up and work correctly. Finding the right rhythm with those clients and getting them in or out can really be helpful because, like anything, a top-down push is key. In terms of getting adoption.

Stephen:
And then a producer and a show caller, those combos, often sometimes they can be the same, sometimes they're different on the scale of the event. If the two can be in agreement and in a relationship that this is where we're going to make our edits and we're going to push it from there.

Stephen:
And ultimately I find that the crew does adopt, but it's just a transition, we're in the middle of a transition decade call it, it's just going to take some time. Let me come back to a couple of these questions. Dave wanted to ask you another one.

Stephen:
Just in terms of tracking and using it in your live environment, what are some of the fun ways you're doing that? And just kind of how do you use Shoflo mid-show?

Mark:
Yeah, my feeling about tracking is that I do two things. During the rehearsal process, I encourage every member to turn on tracking. I remind them of my name in case they've forgotten and to drop it down at the bottom and look for my name.

Mark:
I remind them how valuable tracking is going to be to them as we get farther into the show process, and I selfishly get tired of hearing the question, "Where are we?" And my answer is always, "Turn on tracking, and you'll know exactly where we are."

Mark:
And the other thing about tracking is that as a show caller or as a producer, whoever is advancing the rundown just needs to be vigilant about it. It's easy to get overwhelmed in what's going on, on stage in front of you, or what your next cue is and forget to advance.

Mark:
I have a little device I bring with me to some shows that's kind of a Franken hybrid of a foot pedal that I use to advance Shoflo because sometimes our hands are full. I might have a script

on my left, and I might be writing something down on a notepad somewhere or talking, actually turning around and talking to a client.

Mark:
So it is possible to use all sorts of different methods to advance Shoflo. So I love the tracking feature, and I always, just as the show starts, just as the audience is coming during walk-in, you'll often hear me say on com, "Are you tracking me?" Or "Turn on tracking. I am in the document."

Mark:
And then further, during the rehearsal process, tracking is really valuable because as we jump from session to session, to session in out of order rehearsals instead of having to flip through eight pages of an Excel spreadsheet, I will track in immediately to that next rehearsal block and the crew can immediately find where we're at, see what the mic assignment is, see what videos are coming up.

Mark:
So as valuable as I think tracking is in the actual show itself, it's really valuable in rehearsal as well.

Stephen:
I love that. I think Mark, if you're set up for it, why don't you... So I'm currently tracking Mark if you want to just kind of advance a couple of rows, and I don't know if you've got your foot pedal.

Mark:
Yep, there we go.

Stephen:
So, Mark's in Boca and I'm in Orlando and so just by choosing him from a dro-down there can be more than one, we're now auto-following him as he advances. So it can be like this where's is cue by cue in a live show environment or it could be completely out of order.

Stephen:
Let's say things are just going haywire; you have the ability just to say, "Hey, you know what, we're skipping this presenter, or we're skipping this element altogether." We're going to move on to something totally different. And that's where you're not only saying it over com, "Hey guys, scratch out item 46 we're killing the video, we're moving it to after the panel."

Stephen:
But to be able to both move the elements, the item in Shoflo but then actually track and skip over elements if you need to or whatever it is, that's kind of the fun part where Shoflo can kind of level up in its value for you and your crew on show site.

Mark:
And I don't know if you saw what I just did, but you mentioned skipping cue's which happens all the time, that somebody skips a video or you're jumping to a different part of that. And although I will jump there in tracking a little tip that I do as well is, I'll go back and immediately turn that column red to indicate that it didn't happen. That we jumped it.

Stephen:
Cool.

Mark:
Because when we're done with that session, the client will often say to me, what did we skip? Did we miss that video? So I can go back and say, "Yep, your right, he didn't intro that video, we skipped it. So we got to put it in tomorrow's session." Or whatever.

Stephen:
That's cool. I like that. Okay, so real quick, I'm going to switch to just another view, and then we'll go really into Q and A for the last five minutes. But just as was spoken, we've been mostly looking at what we call the complex view.

Stephen:
There are some other views in Shoflo. Your crew will probably try different views out, that's what's fun about Shoflo. So Mark, if you advance one or two rows, you can kind of see this one's a little fatter, it's got a little bit more clarity around which row you're specifically on.

Stephen:
But the downside is you see less of them, and so there's pros and cons to everything. Mark mentioned it a little bit, but every user gets all the columns, and then they get to choose which ones they want, there are some shortcuts like command E, so I can actually say, okay I'm going to move the center screen over to the left, I'm going to move the LED over, and spider presets and I'm going to hide audio because that's not me, and staging.

Stephen:
And this just really again, this is just an example of if I was the video engineer or spider guy, this might be the exact version that I need for my success and I'm removing the noise, which anyone who's in the production environment knows it can be chaotic especially if it's not going well and according to rehearsal. So the more that you can remove noise, I find that both the show caller but also even the crew members themselves, the show techs can look to Shoflo, get reminded of what they're talking about, follow Mark on the tracking and then execute the cue.

Stephen:
Because at the end of the day, this is all just about running the right cues at the right times, so the customer has a great experience. I'm going to switch over to display view real quick and just demonstrate that. So this is kind of a view that's designed actually for more of a full-screen

kind of experience. Throw it backstage on a monitor and then Mark if you could advance one row here.

Stephen:
There you go. So this one, you can put it up backstage, right? In front of video village or graphics, put it on a big old 70-inch monitor. You can also put just normal Shoflo up back there, take a big screen as well too, but that's kind of what this view is designed for.

Mark:
And we'll sometimes use display view during the paper tech, the table read process where we're sitting around the table with a client, and we'll put up a monitor at the end of the room and as we talk through the Shoflo and we're making live changes to the Shoflo it's a great way to view it sitting around the table with your clients and with the rest of the crew.

Stephen:
I love that you mentioned that. You had mentioned on the front end too, yes, you guys use it in paper techs. Talk about that a little bit.

Mark:
Yeah, we do. We've found it really flexible as a way to get the client sitting around the table with all the key crew members, the producer, the show caller and run step by step through the rundown. We're usually doing this at the client's facility or at the venue but days before the event as we're running through these Shoflo's and we'll put up a monitor at the end of the table, and it gives us the flexibility to make immediate changes, see how that affects the overall timing of the event as we move, delete blocks, that kind of thing.

Mark:
And hopefully, when we walk out of that room, we have a Shoflo that everybody's agreed on, that everybody likes the timing, that everybody likes the flow. So instead of pushing paper around the table and saying, "I'll make those changes and send you out the Excel later tonight." When we walk away from that paper tech sitting around that table, we have a working document.

Stephen:
That's very interesting, yeah. One of my favorite things is always watching Shoflo get built out during a paper tech. Whether you guys do it this way or not, having everybody around on a table and you're just going item by item or element by element, and you're saying, "What are we doing for Steve Jobs' plan out?" And you literally just start seeing all the cells start to populate.

Stephen:
Because if you do different permissions for your crew members, they can actually fill in the LXQ's and I'd be curious about that Mark. How much on a permission wise are you inviting your crew? For example, the LD to actually put those LXQ's in there? Or is he feeding that to you over a com and you're placing that in there?

Mark:
I have had to learn some lessons about this, I think, over the last couple of years. I had the mentality originally that I wanted to control just about every cell in the spreadsheet or in the Shoflo and I've learned that it takes a lot of time to do that obviously and it actually takes a lot of pressure off me to be able to give permissions to the LD to the A1 and to the A2 to fill in mic assignments. To fill in lighting looks.

Mark:
The graphics operators have the flexibility to fill in specific file names, or if they decided that a particular graphic or series of graphics are going to come from a different machine than we had originally discussed, then I'm fine with them making that change as long as at some point in the Q to Q process we've talked through it, and we're all on the same page.

Mark:
I think the flexibility to have people be given permission to make those changes is great. It works for us and depending on the professionalism or level of professionalism of your crew, it either works for you or doesn't. So it just depends on how much trust you want to place in these people and how confident you are in the revisions that they're making.

Stephen:
Yep. I love that, and you can choose your own adventure. You can kind of ease into it and into the deep end on that. There are different permissions, there's read-only where everyone gets to view and track, but they don't get to make edits.

Stephen:
They get their own private notes of course and column orders, and then there's contributor, which is like they can make edits in the production notes column or maybe whatever columns are relevant to them that they have interest in.

Stephen:
And then there's where Mark and maybe some of his other production managers are, which is admin, move rows up and down, add new rows, change items and then show caller who is essentially the same as admin just being able actually to broadcast in position.

Stephen:
Well cool. Let's hit a couple of these other questions that have come in. All right, so, loads of them actually. All right, so can crew view Shoflo on their smartphone, i.e., floor managers, technicians, et cetera?

Stephen:
So I know what the answer to that is and the answer's yes, but I'm very curious Mark, are you finding your crew going mobile or desktop on this?

Mark:

I think the majority of our crew probably is desktop-based because they all have fixed positions that they're working backstage, and it's easy for them to plug in a desktop. The only members of the crew that I've definitely seen use an iPad or an iPhone or a mobile phone are maybe the A2 is definitely doing that because they're running around constantly trying to run people down, to track people down and move mics around the stage. So definitely the A2, that's a big plus. Other than that, there are very few positions I think that don't lend themselves to having a laptop in front of you, but that's been just my experience.

Stephen:

Yeah. Well and we... So I think about a year and a half ago, two years ago, we started to walk into the area of mobile development with an IOS app. I wouldn't say it was our strongest play, our strongest move, but we're really learning how to do that more, and we made a big improvement, a big update to our IOS app, I think in September.

Stephen:

So anyone who's used it there gives it another shot and keep giving us feedback. We're looking to learn how to do that really well and deliver. I would say in general though mobile is going to be really good for a read-only experience if you're going to be doing what Mark's talking about, making big edits, tracking, doing complex things like moving rows the sweet spot there is all day in Shoflo on a desktop or something like that.

Mark:

And I can tell you where I use it because I have it on my iPad and why that's really invaluable to me as a producer/show caller when I'm doing both roles is because I'm often up on stage with the client during rehearsal. I'm not always back in front of the house, so when I'm standing on stage with a client in the rehearsal process, I have that iPad open right in front of me.

Mark:

I have Shoflo on the iPad, and I have used it on my iPad to move cue blocks, but especially to reference what's coming up next and since I'm wearing a wireless com it's possible for me to call the show from that iPad while standing on stage in rehearsal. So that is a big plus for me.

Stephen:

That's cool. Something that came from... A little birdie passed a note to me from someone who works at MIG as well, too, wanted to ask you to mention time stamps and how you guys have been using the timestamps column. Have you been making that Mark?

Mark:

Yeah. We do use timestamps. So what I think is really great about that is the ability to tell the client where you're at in the overall over/under the time of the show. So as long as you're, like I said, vigilant earlier about advancing the cue and throwing down a timestamp, then you can easily track where you're at in the overall Shoflo and when the client says, "Are we behind?" "Yes, we're three minutes 33 seconds behind. It looks like we're going to have a 15-minute block coming up, do you want to shorten that block?" So that's really flexible and easy to do.

Stephen:
Cool. Yeah, and then you can turn, so this is a timestamp column, you get to it by hitting show or hide timestamps. And then if you turn this little guy blue, it'll actually follow as you advance your show caller tracking, and it'll just place those timestamps in there for you.

Stephen:
Okay cool. Another one came in. What are those sweet little shortcuts for removing columns left and right? I will tell you. For me, it's command left and right arrow, but for everybody in the Windows world, it's going to be control.

Stephen:
The real fun part there is this little question mark at the top, and we got loads of them guys. So if anyone's curious, it's helpful. But yeah, the ones you saw are command E hides it and command left and right arrow moves those left and right.

Stephen:
Same thing if you're an admin, command up and down arrow will move your rows, which is pretty rock and roll. I've got another one here from, oh man, an old-time friend, Dave Node. Now often putting up a larger monitor side stage and presenters on deck can see where the show is at. Oh cool.

Stephen:
So it's one where he's just saying he's doing that with probably display view but that idea of putting it stage left or right, that's a great way to sort of if you're looking to champion Shoflo, not for our sake but for your own to get more adoption inside your crew, start with that.

Stephen:
Just start by putting it on a giant monitor backstage or stage left or stage right. I've seen people do it in the green room, especially with that display view in the green room, and what that benefit is people just; it brings the topic up. People are like, "This is cool, I can see what's next, awesome. That was helpful."

Stephen:
And then the next time you go, "Hey, do you want it a little bit more helpful? Let me send you an invite as a user to this, and you can kind of reorder columns." So it's a good kickoff in terms of the conversation, so I'm glad Dave mentioned that.

Stephen:
Another one for you, Mark, would you recommend a different network for the crew versus the wireless that is provided to attendees? Can you speak to how you guys approach that?

Mark:
Yeah. I can speak to that, I'm not the IT person on the show, but I can speak to what we do and definitely use a different network. So reliability and the no-fail mindset really being the key is why would you go on the attendee network if you had a choice?

Mark:
So we always have a choice, and so we set up our own routers, our own network infrastructure, and although we sometimes have to live with shared bandwidth in that scenario, we at least know that we're connected to our own network. And so yes, definitely set up your own network.

Stephen:
And yeah, from the technical we can help a little bit there. If you're on the attendee's network, I guarantee something like this is going to happen. They're all going to walk into the room, and whether they actually meant to hit the wifi routers and the access points, their phones are just going to start asking.

Stephen:
Even if they don't have the password for it, it's just going to start pinging and going, hey this one's available, this one's available. But when you do that times, if you have 4,000 people in the audience, that's a pretty big spike in hits on the AP, and you will feel that. It will settle down because at the end of the day, only so many people will access that access point, but you will feel that for call it 20 minutes or even 30 minutes long, and it can be a little scary.

Stephen:
So we generally do try to say, if you can do your own network you can. On that end, though, Shoflo is kilobytes. We're not sending a lot back and forth. Once you load Shoflo, it's really just a bunch of kilobytes going back and forth in terms of asking for updates.

Stephen:
Well, I'll tell you what. I want to wrap this up. We try to get done by 2:45 or 45 minutes. You guys have been rocking. Mark, I'd love to just kind of ask for you to just take a minute, anything else just in your mind that you feel like would be helpful to cover before we kind of goes into wrap mode?

Mark:
I think the only other thing I would say about Shoflo, in general, is that we found that it increases the flexibility of our work process, and it decreases our pre-show workload. So when you're dealing with tight budgets and clients that are very focused on the number of hours that the producers, the PAs, the content producers are putting into the pre-production process, rather than reduce that number of hours avoid increasing that number of hours and use the time for something else.

Mark:
So for me, Shoflo has freed up quite a bit of time in the pre-production process, which allows me to do other things. If we don't need that time, of course, we give it back to the client, and it becomes a cost-savings to them but more often than not, that time is just better spent doing something else. So Shoflo's created the flexibility that allows me to spend less time in the pre-production show rundown creation process and more time doing things that probably have a bigger client impact and that they appreciate a little more than my work in an Excel spreadsheet.

Stephen:
Yeah. Love it. Well, guys, Multi Image Group, amazing premiere, I've done corporate events for, well for a while and worked on some of the biggest ones that are out there, and I can tell you I went and visited their offices and I've seen their work and its amazing.

Stephen:
So I highly recommend them if you're a freelancer and your good at what you do reach out to them because they do the right size shows, the ones you want to be a part of. And then, Mark, thank you very much. I really appreciate you taking the time and walking us through best practices.

Stephen:
At the end of the day, you guys are doing it at the pro level, and if we can be a part of that with you, that's fulfillment on our end, and that makes us happy. So I appreciate it, and guys, we will be following up and sending this email with links to MIG's website.

Stephen:
MIG.cc, and then if you have any questions still you can reply to us, and we'll have the video attached. But with that, appreciate your time, Mark, and have a wonderful rest of your day, everybody.