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Streambox: Solid Video Transport

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SEATTLE

When Tribune Broadcasting acquired Portland television station KWBP, the engineering team at Tribune-owned KCPQ/KTWB was tasked with providing remote control for the station from our Seattle facilities. The goal was to regionalize operations in Seattle so that the Portland station could run unmanned.

The overall project was quite complex, as we were joining pieces that hadn't been used together before. Among other things, it required monitoring of off-air signals from the station's digital and analog transmitters, and cable and satellite retransmission outlets over a 180 mile ATM network. Unfortunately, we didn't consider the monitoring issue until the project was nearing completion.

NO LEGACY SYSTEMS

We began by looking at a legacy system used in the radio broadcast industry for muxing signals, data and telemetry onto carriers. However, I didn't want to go backwards; I wanted to find something that was Internet-based, as we had fairly high bandwidth connectivity between Seattle and Portland.

I was tasked with producing a regional operations center with cutting-edge technology and wanted a solution that would

provide an alternative to having to configure Windows Media on our own. That's why we got involved with Stream-box, Inc., a Seattle-based developer and manufacturer of video transport solutions for managing and moving video streams over IP-based networks.

I became familiar with Streambox through local contacts and asked them for an end-to-end solution, delivered within a fixed time and at a fixed price. They said they could deliver and they did.

The Streambox SBT3-1000 ACT-L3 solution worked out of the box. We installed the system a few weeks before we launched remote control of KWBP, and it has operated flawlessly for a year. The system lets us look at the signals from the transmitters via the Internet link in a closed monitoring loop. Just seconds later in Seattle, master control operators can see what actually went out over the air in Portland.

PRETTY GOOD IMAGE

We're running three Streambox encoders at 300 kbps, which helps to save ATM service costs and provides a pretty good image. Each encoder handles one video and two audio channels. In more than a year of operation, the Streambox encoders have proven very robust and solid. We have had no problems with them since they were drop-shipped

from Seattle. We knew we wanted a system that would work right out of the box and it actually happened. That was really the motivation for taking this approach: to have someone else engineer a complete system for me that I didn't have to work on or worry about, as we had so many other things to figure out and bring online.

The Streambox approach wound up being cheaper than the legacy approach and getting a Windows Media-based solution to function to our satisfaction just didn't seem worth the effort, especially when Streambox could deliver three channels of video, six channels of audio and a successful installation within three weeks. When someone tells me they can do something like this, and they do it, it's a great feeling. We let one part of this project out of our hands, and it worked out great because right around the corner, we had a partner that had the expertise, responsiveness and solution we needed.

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