

SES PLATFORM SERVICES

Turnkey Distribution with Grass Valley Integrated Playout Solution



BACKGROUND

As an experienced multichannel service provider, SES Platform Services GmbH (formerly ASTRA Platform Services, a division of SES) has built a thriving business helping content owners distribute their programs across Europe. Based on its success in Europe, SES has been expanding its activities worldwide.

In 2010, SES established a seamless broadcast service between Africa and Europe for Top TV, On Digital Media (ODM)'s fast growing pay-TV package of 50 TV and 25 music channels for the South African market. By setting up a high-end customized DVB infrastructure, SES was able to help Top TV launch its new multichannel service on May 1 of that year, in a mere three months after initial discussions.

ODM is currently operating a digital headend at its Johannesburg headquarters, and a variety of channels are fed to SES's Unterföhring facility (near Munich, Germany) via double-redundant fiber-optic cable paths and combined with

the other worldwide channels on the platform. SES is also ingesting a number of channels for ODM.

SES now handles all of Top TV's master control, automation, and playout requirements from a single integrated playout solution from PubliTronic called the Nexus-avs (Advanced Video Server). It's a video server with integrated audio, video, and graphics capabilities for all types of digital television channel playout and channel branding applications.

The PubliTronic Nexus server line (now owned by Grass Valley® and known as the K2 Edge™ Integrated Playout System) is an integrated broadcast-ready playout solution that comes with an automation software solution called Cobalt™. SES uses Nexus and Cobalt in conjunction with a scheduling application, written in-house, called PTS. Schedules generated in PTS are downloaded to the Cobalt system, which allows the SES team to maintain control over individual template-based graphics and clip playback with one integrated solution.

CUSTOMER:

SES Platform Services, Germany

(formerly ASTRA Platform Services)

CHALLENGE

Deliver multiple SD and HD channels with different branding, using the same hardware, and to be able to scale up easily as demand grows

SOLUTION

Multiple, purpose-built, integrated, automated, multichannel playout server systems integrated with SES's in-house scheduling system, for all the playout services they offer

BENEFITS

The Grass Valley integrated playout approach takes up very little real estate, yet allows SES's customers to launch sophisticated-looking new channels easily and at relatively low cost

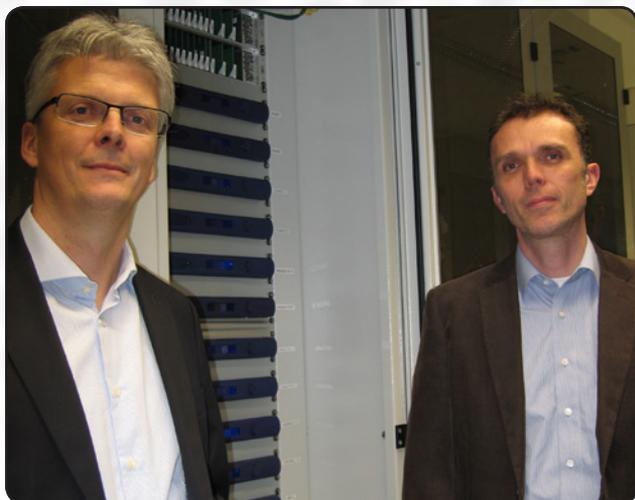
AUTOMATED ARCHITECTURE

SES uses the Nexus integrated playout, Cobalt automation, and PTS scheduling software for many of the playout services it offers: starting from an entry level Playout Basic up to its high-end Playout Pro solution. Grass Valley has taken the Nexus technology and enhanced it with new features in the K2 Edge Integrated Playout System.

At SES's facility in Unterföhring, they simply set the system up based on a client's requirements, incorporate the

"We like the integrated playout approach because it takes up very little real estate in our facility (only 1 RU per server) and it allows customers to launch new channels, complete with animated on-air branding, easily and at relatively low cost."

Roger Gresser, VP Playout & MAM, SES



“As our business expands, we plan to add more channels of the new Grass Valley K2 Edge servers. It’s a Linux-based system with a purpose-built, high availability architecture for mission-critical 24/7 playout applications.”

Stefan Hennecke, Chief Operating Officer, SES (pictured, left)

client’s content and playlist, and then, according to Stefan Hennecke, Chief Operating Officer at SES, the system literally runs itself—adding graphics and other data along the way. A playlist of previously scheduled clips is imported into Cobalt, where graphics and other elements are added based on specific rules.

“The architecture provides a highly flexible platform with high level of playout functionality where different workflows are migrated to one,” Hennecke said.

The full-service company now uses the Grass Valley/PubliTronic Nexus server for the playout of 16 channels (and a few more to come, using a rack of new K2 Edge servers) that include mainly movies and special interest channels. The K2 Edge Integrated Playout System combines media playout, channel graphics, asset management, and automation into one tightly integrated system.

POWER AND FLEXIBILITY

Hennecke said its power and flexibility cannot be overstated. “We started to use the Nexus solution in 2010, in order to gain some experience with the then newly emerging integrated playout solution concept,” he said. “With it we launched a new pay-TV bouquet for our customer in a very short timeframe.”

For SES, the Grass Valley/PubliTronic integrated solution provided a quick and easy way to accommodate all the customer’s requests, starting with logo insertion, aspect ratio signaling (video index) and ending with template-based graphics insertion (lower thirds etc.). They were very pleased, and continue to be on the air today.

“Today we run integrated playout with PubliTronic for playout channels with a mid range complexity,” said Roger Gresser, VP Playout & MAM. “For very simple channels (e.g., channels with no graphics etc. and channels with very specific branding requirements) we still run a modular playout approach. So we try to use the best of the available solutions depending on the requirements.”

MULTIFORMAT DISTRIBUTION FROM THE SAME BOX

One of the key features Hennecke and his team use most on the Nexus box is the ability to run an HD and SD channel with different branding using the same hardware. Another important feature is the (DVB) subtitling capability of the system.

The Grass Valley K2 Edge server is available in three levels of capability: K2 Edge Express, for entry level channels with minimal graphics needs; K2 Edge Pro, for main-line channels with more sophisticated graphics such as picture-in-picture; and K2 Edge Elite systems, which offer switching for up to four HD sources and multichannel 2D and 3D graphics complete with DVE moves including credit squeeze.

And Hennecke said they plan to install more of the K2 Edge Express servers over the next three months.

“Reliability and flexibility are two things that attract our customers and help our business grow,” he added. “That’s what our reputation is based on and that’s why we are committed to Grass Valley’s new implementation of the video server.”

ABOUT GRASS VALLEY – THE PREMIER VIDEO TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS COMPANY

For more than 50 years, the Grass Valley name has been synonymous with innovation, leadership, and performance. Our full range of solutions and services is unmatched in the industry, leveraging the economies of scale of the IT industry with our proprietary core knowledge of media processing and storage. Grass Valley customers include most of the world’s leading broadcasters, teleproduction facilities, and service providers, as well as independent video professionals who rely on our products to cover

the world’s most high-profile live events, as well as to benefit from efficiencies in day-to-day operations. When you’re watching news, sports, or entertainment programming—whether on a TV, the web, or a mobile device—you’re watching Grass Valley at work in today’s connected world.

For information about Grass Valley solutions and services, please visit: www.grassvalley.com.

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