

ABS BROADCAST

London's ABSolute Delivery Platform drives client revenue



CUSTOMER

ABS Broadcast

ABS is one of the largest independently owned playout and television facilities companies in Europe. The home of the ABSolute Delivery Platform, ABS manages the transmission and technical requirement of many major television channels globally

www.abs.tv

CHALLENGE

Reduce equipment footprint while better serving its clients with a fully integrated playout system with the goals of increasing revenue and optimizing a fast ROI

SOLUTION

The K2 Edge integrated, automated playout solution provides channel branding, audio and video file management and scheduling, commercial insertion, and program playout features in a single box

BENEFITS

Less technical revisions, lower energy costs for cooling the servers, and more available rack room for expansion, all while providing a 24 hour turnaround for adding channels

BACKGROUND

Since the advent of the satellite television delivery in the UK, Sassi Jahani, a former BBC broadcast engineer, has understood the need for client services that, in his words, "take the technical headache away from television channels and content owners, leaving them to focus on their core business: monetizing their content."

Jahani founded London-based ABS Broadcast in 1992 with the idea that by offering state-of-the-art technology to support fully managed, high-quality digitization and playout services, it would allow clients to launch new channels quickly with no CapEx investment. ABS also helps its clients reach consumers where they live and work via all of the emerging portable media consumption platforms (laptops, tablets, and smart phones).

Today ABS is one of Europe's largest independently owned playout and television facilities companies, supporting more than 50 general interest and niche-specific TV channels that are distributed around the world. This includes a full mix of entertainment, movies, music, drama, documentaries, and live news.

To meet this need, ABS used to rely on a technical infrastructure outfitted with five boxes from different vendors. But the logistical demands were beginning to get quite extreme. ABS needed a much more elegant solution in order to serve its clients with the best services possible.

SOLUTION

Today, ABS services its clients with one of the world's largest media asset management (MAM) systems and the latest K2 Edge™ integrated media server technology from Grass Valley™. The K2 Edge system provides a full suite of channel branding, audio and video file management and scheduling, commercial insertion, and program playout features in a single box.

Each K2 Edge system includes two features: the Grass Valley K2 TX/MAM™ asset management system, with a central database and Grass Valley Cobalt™ playout automation software.

The K2 TX/MAM server uses a web-based GUI to control all assets including video clips, audio clips, captioning, metadata, and graphic elements. The Cobalt playout automation system manages all on-air events, and for increased reliability, runs completely independent from the database.

An ABSolute Delivery Platform

The K2 Edge servers are at the heart of an innovative initiative at ABS called the ABSolute Delivery Platform. The comprehensive service offering gives clients access a full spectrum of capabilities—from content creation to simultaneous broadcast to multiple outlets.

"At the back end we can ingest and digitize any type of content from anywhere and at the front end we can broadcast it to viewers anywhere using any kind of receiving technology," said Jahani. "We are promoting the platform to encourage clients to maximize the value of their content assets by having them available for reselling without further complication. Once a client's content is archived on the ABSolute Delivery Platform, they can let their sales teams present it to any interested buyer on the basis that the buyer only needs to call ABS and it can be repurposed and delivered in whatever format they require within a matter of hours."

BENEFITS

Indeed, the Grass Valley K2 Edge system enables ABS to get new channels up and running very quickly and easily. So much so that the company has gained



“Obviously we need equipment that works well with minimum attention, but we also like the integration of activities in the Grass Valley K2 Edge proposition. With our previous technical partners we needed five boxes from separate vendors to achieve what we now do with a single K2 Edge server from Grass Valley. That means less technical revisions, lower energy costs to drive them and keep them cool, and more room in our racks to accommodate other K2 Edge servers that can drive other revenue streams.”

Sass Jahani, Founder
ABS Broadcast

a reputation for designing flexible infrastructures that can be adapted to a variety of business models. It's something ABS' clients value very highly.

Giving New Channels the K2 Edge

“We are known for getting a channel live with a 24 hour turnaround,” said Jahani. “The new K2 Edge servers allow us to offer lots of extra features that we couldn't previously. They also make it simpler for us to meet clients' requirements for late changes much more easily.”

For example, many of ABS's clients broadcasting in the Indian marketplace need late changes to maximize their commercial interests. Typically, playlists don't get locked down as definitively as in the American, European, or Middle Eastern markets and there is an element of inter-channel rivalry to see what content provider can respond to last-minute demands from advertisers. Working with ABS, its clients usually come out on top.

The Grass Valley K2 Edge product family 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. ABS uses the K2 Edge Elite, which provides a very flexible platform to satisfy a variety of image processing and distribution requirements they must meet.

MAM And So Much More

ABS staff leverages K2 Edge to organize, prepare, and manage the transmission and technical requirement of its clients' television channels. The recent launch of its new Media Asset Management (MAM) facility (celebrating the company's 20th anniversary) which includes a fifth unit on the Park Royal site, houses one of the largest state-of-the-art Content Digitization and Media Asset Management facilities in Europe. It's built around a factory-style environment that supports a wide array of analog and digital SD and HD tape digitization, ingest, and management services. The new center is capable of handling hundreds of thousands of hours of video and associated files each year.

“We are finding the Grass Valley TX [transmission] MAM to be very user friendly,” said Jahani. “Because it's on a network, we can review clips from anywhere rather than having to go to a dedicated workstation. Our transmission managers can even log on from home to review an important QC issue—clients can also log on remotely to examine content and metadata.”

Jahani said that his staff often needs to repurpose content for different broadcast

territories by cutting and splicing certain segments and have worked closely with Grass Valley engineers to develop the MAM system the way it is today. The servers' ability to add multi-layer and high-end graphics is very attractive to ABS's clients.

Server Training

The company has also established the ABS Academy, which provides training for internal staff as well as those employees working for ABS clients. Jahani says that the ABS Academy is now a cornerstone of his company's on-going endeavor to provide a full suite of high-quality delivery services.

In full operation for about a year, the Grass Valley K2 Edge servers have performed very well, according to Jahani, and the ABS transmission staff “love it.” In fact, Jahani expects the servers to pay for themselves “very quickly,” as the operational costs and minimal maintenance ensures a fast return on investment.

“When we first looked around for new technology partners we were impressed with the integrated approach [of the K2 Edge servers],” said Jahani. “We also had it recommended and endorsed by friends in the business. We live in an economic climate where all playout technology is cost sensitive and falling, so the concept of an integrated system that can do anything is very compelling.”

ABOUT GRASS VALLEY – THE PREMIER VIDEO TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS COMPANY

With a rich history serving the broadcast and professional video industries, the Grass Valley name is synonymous with innovation, leadership, and performance. With a full range of products and services supporting many of the world's most high-profile live events, Grass Valley offers the most comprehensive portfolio of software, services and IT infrastructure. Customers deploying Grass Valley solutions include most of the world's leading broadcast and teleproduction IT facilities, independent video professionals, as well

as emerging content creators and distributors providers of broadband, telecommunications, and transmission services. When you're watching news, sports, or entertainment programming, whether on a TV, the web, or a mobile phone, you're watching Grass Valley at work in the connected world.

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