

CASE STUDY

WENY-HD



CUSTOMER

WENY-HD,
Horseheads, NY, US

CHALLENGES

Upgrade core infrastructure and transform WENY-HD's news coverage and picture quality by converting to HD.

SOLUTION

A powerful, multiformat HD switcher from Grass Valley. The strength and flexibility of the solution has enabled WENY-HD to meet the growing demand for HD coverage for viewers in its service area.

BENEFITS

HD switcher helped WENY-HD to reduce operational costs, increase reliability, and transform the level of picture quality the station can deliver to its audience.

Grass Valley Kayak Makes Small Station Look Big

BACKGROUND

For smaller, local television stations such as WENY-HD in the Elmira, New York DMA (market 174), serving the central and western Twin Tiers of upstate New York and Northern Pennsylvania, the importance of delivering the highest possible image quality and news content is paramount to winning the ratings battle in an extremely competitive TV market. The ability to offer HD services to viewers plays an important role in enabling stations like WENY-HD to stand out from its competitors.

A February 2013 study conducted by Leichtman Research Group found that 75 percent of US households had at least one HDTV, while 52 percent of US households had adopted HDTV within the previous five years alone. For Kevin Lilly, the co-owner and president of Lilly Broadcasting (the company which privately owns WENY-HD), this emerging trend presented an exciting opening to exploit the growth opportunities ushered in by the digital revolution and HD.

Having helped to oversee a period of steady transition since Lilly Broadcasting's takeover of the local ABC affiliate WENY-HD in 2000 (now ABC, CBS, and CW2), Lilly realized it was necessary for the station to upgrade its local news output to HD. Knowing how the needs of consumers had evolved, Lilly wanted to identify a future-proofed HD production system that would help WENY-HD change the local TV market.

Cost efficiency, long-term reliability, and the capability to deliver a fast return on investment were key criteria, particularly for a small market station. After assessing the production switchers on the market, Lilly Broadcasting chose the Grass Valley® Kayak™ 1 M/E HD digital production switcher and a series of GeckoFlex™ modular technologies to help enable the transformation of WENY-TV to WENY-HD.

"We wanted to adopt a system which did more than just keep our head above water," said Lilly. "In the analog world of 10 years ago, the cost of equipment and software prohibited us from making such a quantum leap forward. Until our conversion to HD, we were restricted in terms of innovation and improving overall picture quality. It would have been virtually impossible for a station the size of ours to compete in the HD world."

Al Evans, Director of Engineering for WENY-HD, said: "When we switched from analog to digital in 2009, we looked at how we might go about making the further upgrade to HD. In the past we used to have issues that required multiple production staff to perform multiple tasks, taking each individual piece of content one at a time, just to get broadcasts to air.

"This was an enormous drain on our resources, particularly in terms of manpower, time management, and finance, so we had to look for the most appropriate products on the market which would allow us to maximize efficiencies in all of these areas, and simplify our work processes."

On April 23, 2012, WENY-HD became the first local television station in the Twin Tiers to broadcast local news in HD, driven by Grass Valley's Kayak, which provides more power per M/E than any other switcher in its class—a perfect fit for small stations such as WENY-HD, who need a high-performance solution at an affordable price.

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Following the success of WENY-HD's HD transition, Lilly Broadcasting has used the same infrastructure to support a similar upgrade at its co-located sister stations, WSEE-HD (CBS) and WICU-HD (NBC) (both based in Erie, Pennsylvania). And according to Lilly, the success of WENY-HD offers a transferable business model which can be replicated across other network affiliates.

"We are always looking for ways to upsize in the television market and to do that, we need to guarantee the efficiency of our workflows—and that has been the real value of this deployment. We are differentiating ourselves from our competitors," he said. "As an owner, I want to concentrate on pulling together more content, better quality content, and not have to worry about the quality of our pictures when we distribute across our markets."

"In my experience, when the engineers are happy, I'm delighted. It's a sign that the Grass Valley equipment provides outstanding results. We want to make TV, not play around with computers, and with Grass Valley equipment, we can focus on the news product itself, knowing that we always deliver a high-quality HD experience."

ABOUT GRASS VALLEY

Grass Valley is changing the way live television is made and delivered. Recognized with 18 Emmy® awards for technology innovation, Grass Valley's product portfolio—from image acquisition to playout—offers a complete end-to-end workflow of flexible, future-proofed solutions which enable broadcasters and content owners to build multiscreen, multiplatform futures. By simplifying and enhancing the way content is produced and distributed, Grass Valley gives customers the freedom they need to be creative in the studio, the field, and the newsroom. Merging optimizations of IT technologies with best-in-breed media systems, Grass Valley's next generation solutions deliver higher quality

and greater efficiencies. Customers include world-leading broadcasters, teleproduction facilities, service providers, government, religious, educational, corporate, and independent video professionals. Grass Valley is headquartered in San Francisco, and maintains local presence across the globe with offices throughout North and Latin America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia-Pacific regions.

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

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