Case Study: Rebuilding ABCs Studios into Automated Production Facilities

Techtel Upgrades 12 studios and control rooms with the latest automation technology

TECHTEL

BACKGROUND

Launched in 1932, Australian Broadcasting Corporation ("ABC") has become a much loved part of the Australian society and its cultural fabric. From a single radio service, the ABC has developed into a multi-platform media operation and a public broadcaster of international renown, delivering Australian stories and conversations across the nation and beyond.

As innovation and evolution continue to streamline the TV production, ABC required to rebuild their 12 head news studios across Australia's capital cities into brand new production and broadcast facilities with the latest infrastructure and design. After a selective tendering process, ABC enlisted Techtel to design, build and integrate each of these 12 studios and their respective control rooms with the latest automation technology and a brand new studio control core which will provide a future-proof live production platform that will support both current and future broadcast environments.

PROJECT

Drawing back on previous experience in studio automation at Special Broadcasting Service ("SBS"), Techtel developed an entirely new system design in line with ABC's requirements. The solution involved a brand new studio automation control core as well as brand new Broadcast IT equipment, consisting of the following:

Vizrt Studio Automation

A software and control core with a simple interface, proven interoperability and tight integration with ABC's AP ENPS news production system, also commissioned and integrated by Techtel as a part of a separate project. The template sharing license capability of the Vizrt platform will be able to copy a story from their News production system and instantly share it with all other users on the network.

Panasonic HD Video Cameras

These Cameras with Canon HD Lenses provide superior image quality, while supporting remote control operation under the Telemetrics robotic camera systems – a key automation feature of this project.

CueScript Teleprompter

A 17' prompter package with a talent monitor, operated by the CueB Prompting Software which connects via ethernet to any desktop device making it ideal for remote prompting. This IP-enabled prompting solution is the only product available on the market to have the ability to add a countdown timer to prompter screen, as required by ABC.

Telemetrics Camera Robotic and Control System

These possess a flexible architecture for studio automation and an integrated and intuitive robotics control surface. The system comprises of Telemetrics PT-LP-S5 Robotic/Manual pan-tilt heads and EP7-600 Robotic Pedestals with smooth variable operating speed; all under the control of a Telemetrics remotely controlled Robotic Camera Control Panel (RCCP-1). Among its many distinctions, RCCP-1 allows a single operator to control all of the cameras in the studio, providing users with access to deep menu controls of broadcast cameras without purchasing dedicated camera control units.

As a part of the project SLA, Techtel ran extensive system and user tests prior to going on air for each studio; and have been on-site for go-live support throughout each switchover. Techtel provided specialist training on every system component, mainly for the operators of the robotics system, the prompting system and the studio automation software.

The project was rolled out in several consecutive phases: foundational design, detailed systems design, installation, commissioning, testing and switchover. Work on the project started in June, 2016 and the final studio has gone live on 14th April 2019, marking the successful completion of the project

Yamaha Audio Mixer

The latest generation of Yamaha's all-in-one digital audio mixing, processing and routing system which employs Dante audio over IP – an uncompressed, multi-channel digital media networking technology, with near-zero latency and synchronization.

LYNX Technik Terminal Equipment

Which supports large studio installations like the ABC encompassing multiple frames of modules spanning across many different locations all networked into the centralized APPolo control system. Its latest technology and fabrication techniques deliver unmatched performance, feature sets and reliability.

Apantac Multiviewer

Tahoma T# - a cost effective multiviewer solution which supports serial tally over IP integration with the Grass Valley switcher using Kalypso protocol thus satisfying ABC's request for a multi format input multiviewer.

Grass Valley Vision Switchers

A Karrera K-Frame package which includes control panel video frame and licenses, complemented by a four channel clipstore package based on the K2 Summit Server platform.

TV Logic Broadcast Monitors

Which utilise a state-of-art high definition TFT-LCD panel with 10-bit colour depth.

RESULTS

ABC now operates their 12 head studios out of brand new control rooms using the next generation studio automation system which maximized the utilization of all aspects of their broadcast operations including smarter use of manpower; improved speed-to-air efficiency, higher utilization of other integrated technical and studio resources. The nature of the control core and the way all project elements have been integrated with each other create a future-proof live production platform that will support both current and future production values for ABC for years to come.

ABC is also the first ever news broadcaster to benefit from CueScript's on screen timer within the prompter monitor, which enables operators to add in messages, clocks and timers without disrupting the prompting script; as well as the first to use the Apantac dynamic UMD integration with Grass Valley.

Furthermore, Studio 24, which broadcasts the 7.30 report out of Sydney has become ABC's first Live HD Studio, which shares the same common systems as the other 11 upgraded facilities allowing these other studios to transition to HD at any stage.

"Drawing on over 30 years expertise in broadcast systems integration, Techtel designed, built and integrated an entire broadcast network of studio and control room facilities for one of Australia's largest broadcasters", said Mal Chandler, Techtel CEO. "Despite a tight schedule, each phase of this multi-faceted project was delivered on time with zero disruption to live broadcasts. Techtel is proud to have been a part of this historic venture", Mal concluded.

"Without a doubt, Techtel's contribution will leave a long-lasting impact on ABC's broadcast operations for years to come", commented Justin O'Byrne, Project Manager at ABC. "ABC now has a brand new studio infrastructure which can control more equipment and is more powerful than ever".

Techtel will continue supporting ABC in their transition to new technology through ongoing on-site service and remote technical support over the next few months.

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