

System Integration in a Time of IP-based Projects

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In a previous article, dB Broadcast described the increasing amounts of consultancy work it is called upon to provide as its clients strive to understand the changing environment and how best to leverage the benefits. Broadcast technology becomes ever more sophisticated, and developments in IP-driven systems are changing the role of the systems integrator (SI).

Broadcasters know that an IP-based route is the future, but in many cases are unclear as to the best way for them to go. The sheer pace of change presents new challenges, as the products, standards and skills necessary to realise this vision fully are often not in place, requiring work-arounds and bespoke approaches – a challenge that SIs are uniquely placed to address. Broadcasters also require advice that is independent of particular hardware and software providers, yet which has insight into vendor roadmaps for the latest solutions.

dB has identified many emerging trends in the industry, in particular the transition to new formats and technologies to support a digital, data-driven world. From specialised, dedicated hardware platforms to software based, potentially virtualised applications running on IP-connected infrastructure. And from bespoke traditional wiring to use of building-wide IT/Data infrastructure. Modern broadcast facilities already contain extensive network infrastructure which carries much control, monitoring, metadata and A/V data. Given the demands on the industry, extending such infrastructure to support production is a logical next step.

Many control and monitoring systems are Windows® based and are configurable by the SI. Products such as Axon's Cerebrum allow dB engineers to configure a complex workflow via a custom intuitive user-friendly graphical interface.

Where the nature of the project requires it, the SI works with suppliers to build a 'proof of concept' system to verify the interoperability between products. This is common on leading edge projects and in some cases has been on such a large scale it has become a Proof-of-System.

As the name implies, an important part of the role of the Systems Integrator is to ensure that products work together properly, and where necessary to resolve any conflicts. This requires managed discussions between suppliers to ensure that each piece of equipment communicates with other equipment as required. Most often, any problems involve software issues between dedicated products or between software products. While standards such as 3G have been ratified, in other cases, manufacturers have nominated their own standards, either individually or as a group. In such cases, due diligence requires rigorous testing to verify that all equipment will work as expected. In a recent

example, two products each specified as meeting the appropriate broadcast standard were still not communicating with each other; dB's role was to ensure effective communication between the suppliers to resolve the problem.

Recent examples of SI services undertaken by dB Broadcast include a multi-site HD technology refresh, DPP-compliant file delivery workflows and 4K/UHD production/payout.

In summary, dB is a CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE for the delivery of modern day fit for purpose broadcast systems.

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About dB Broadcast

dB Broadcast (dB) is one of the UK's largest and most successful independent systems integrators, and is expert in broadcast system design and installation from studio through to transmission. dB is independent of hardware and software vendors and represents a centre of excellence for the delivery of modern day, fit for purpose broadcast systems. Consultancy and after-sales support are an increasing part of dB's portfolio of services.

dB also designs and manufactures products for the broadcast industry including: Hawkeye for switching and monitoring all types of broadcast signals, MERlin DVB-T2 and DVB-T monitoring receivers, Showman multi-standard analogue TV receiver/demodulator and the Cardinal range of mains distribution units (MDUs).

With purpose-built headquarters in Cambridgeshire UK, dB has approximately 20,000 square feet of space for prefabrication and test of customer systems.

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