Imagine COMMUNICATIONS™

Maine Public Broadcasting Network

Live-Update BXF-Based Solution Improves Efficiencies Across Traffic and Automation Workflow

Customer Profile

The state's premier, independent media resource, Maine Public Broadcasting Network (MPBN) was formed in 1992 through the merger of the educational radio and television stations provided by the University of Maine System, and WCBB public television, operated by Colby, Bates and Bowdoin Colleges. In addition to Maine, MPBN also reaches most of New Brunswick, Canada, and parts of New Hampshire and Massachusetts. MPBN has office and studio locations in Bangor, Lewiston and Portland, Maine.

Business Challenge

Today's broadcasters, particularly public broadcasting networks, are faced with ever-increasing production demands, yet with reduced resources. So when MPBN undertook a rebuild of its master control operations using a file-based design, implementing technology that would streamline daily processes was critical, particularly as the network considered the potential launch of additional channels.

At MPBN, the operations staff is responsible for a great deal of multitasking: master control and monitoring of five TV stations and seven radio stations, interconnections to three studio sites, automation, job dispatches in case of system failures, ingest and recording, etc. Gone are the days of being able to "throw people at the problem," so often the responsibility for all of these tasks falls on the shoulders of one engineer.

By implementing BXF — and partnering with companies that have BXF-compliant traffic and automation systems — MPBN sought to make technology work for them. Its goals were to cut down on human error rates by eliminating the need to enter data multiple times throughout the workflow, reduce the need for human intervention when schedule changes need to be made, and free up the time of operators from continuous on-air duties so they can spend time on other essential tasks.

Customer
- Maine Public Broadcasting Network

Industry
- Broadcast Television

Challenge
- Implement highly efficient BXF-based system to streamline workflow from traffic to automation. Reduce error rates & need for human intervention, & save time/money.

Solution
- Live-Update™ BXF interface, integrating Myers ProTrack™ traffic and scheduling software, and ADC™ automation

Benefits
- Reduced Error Rates/Time Savings Data need only be entered once; instant, two-way feedback reduces manual exchange errors

- Increased Efficiency Automated workflow allows operators to better manage duties; schedule management from traffic dept. optimizes use of staff

- Faster, Streamlined Workflows Schedules efficiently managed with seamless, interactive operational environment

> "BXF closes the loop and lets the systems do the jobs they're intended for without the need for human intervention. And everyone in the chain, from traffic to operations to billing, always knows the status of events immediately."
>
> — Gil Maxwell, Maine Public Broadcasting Network

Technology Solution

MPBN was the first to deploy the BXF standard in live public television. The network installed the Live-Update solution, a BXF interface that integrates Myers ProTrack traffic and scheduling software and ADC™ automation. Live-Update allows for the seamless exchange of information between traffic and automation, and eliminates the need for many manual processes.

At MPBN, the operations staff and programming staff work closely together. On a typical day, the operations staff takes the daily log and performs a download into the ADC automation system. The ProTrack traffic and scheduling system is used to select the day, instruct the system to download, and then the ADC system fills out the day's log.

After downloading the logs, the operators download a dub list, which is the list of all the interstitials that have to be ingested into the servers. The show data is pre-filled, because it's coming down through BXF in the system. Operators only need to verify they have the content and mark the "in" and "out."

Once the content has been prepped, and ready to go to air, BXF "tells" the programming personnel. Therefore, in the ProTrack system, the content reflects what has been completed in the master control department. BXF enables a continuous, automatic, two-way flow of information — staff no

longer have to walk downstairs or make a phone call to check on the status of content. Programming personnel can get an immediate snapshot of what is and isn't available and whether or not the material on their record list (all the shows that need to be recorded during the day) came in. If human intervention is necessary at any point, that information is also reflected.

In the evening, the ProTrack system submits the next day's record lists to BXF. Once the files are downloaded, the record lists are populated, and the automation system issues the request-to-record at the proper time. Once the show is recorded into the server, the ProTrack software is updated with verification the recording was made. After the show is prepped by the operator, the ProTrack system receives an indicator that all steps have been completed, and the show is now recorded, prepped and ready for air.

At the end of the day, an as-run log is issued from the ADC automation into the ProTrack system, which can then be reconciled against the program log that was submitted. Every time an event airs, it comes immediately back into the ProTrack software. For example, if the station is doing a 30-second spot, every 30 seconds an update is received that the spot has just aired. At the end of the day, the ProTrack system can run a reconciliation of content updates between traffic logs and automation playlists, and issue affidavits.
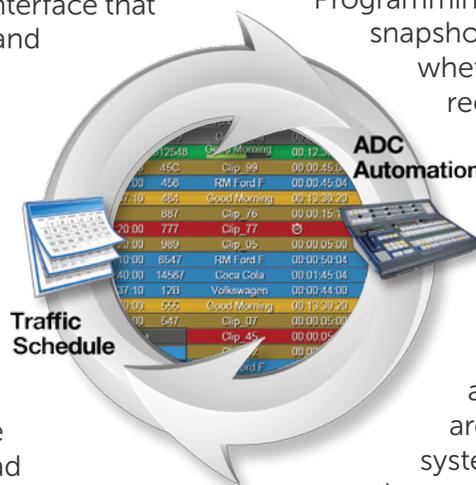
> "Since the BXF-based Live-Update system has been running, I very, very seldom have any errors. Usually, if there's a mistake that's in my discrepancy reports, it's the result of a human error."

— Gil Maxwell, Maine Public Broadcasting Network

Business Value

Reduced Error Rates/Time Savings

With the BXF-based workflow, data must only be entered once; there is no need for additional data re-entry at multiple junctures within the workflow. Instant, electronic communication between traffic and automation greatly reduces the inherent manual exchange errors (such as transposed numbers, etc.).

Increased Efficiency

With Live-Update, master control operators can better manage their duties, as they don't have to dedicate their time to managing the "ins and outs" of the entire workflow — it is all automated. Automation lists/schedule management can now be handled by the traffic department, allowing stations to optimize the use of personnel based on the needs of their particular facility.

Faster, Streamlined Workflows

With the Live-Update BXF-based interface between ProTrack and ADC, information flows bidirectionally and seamlessly. The programming department knows if shows have been recorded, when they are prepped and when they are available. They can run routine purges on content from the traffic systems. And since they receive real-time as-run logs, they can perform reconciliations without staff needing to fill in information, etc.

To learn more, please visit imaginecommunications.com.