



Managing technology through the transition

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The constant question in media technology today is how to manage the transition from existing broadcast technologies to software-defined networks and IP connectivity. Everybody knows that the transition must be made, but for various reasons everyone has a different plan for how to get there. This transition is not unique. The telecommunications industry went through it two decades ago, and had to work out how to maintain legacy systems — sometimes longer than expected — while the new IP solutions became established.

The situation in the media industry is very similar. Typically, broadcasters have significant investments in legacy systems, which must be kept running until they can take the next leap in technology. The challenge comes when they find they cannot get the support they need on legacy systems that are still at the heart of their operations. At Imagine Communications, our slogan is “your path, your pace,” which means that we help customers make that transition when they are ready and in a way that works for their business.

As we all know, broadcasters need to keep their systems running at an availability rate of five, or even six nines (99.999+ per cent uptime). They need technical support which will achieve that: resources able to address issues in legacy equipment, with parts immediately available to keep hardware solutions running.

What the industry needs is a suite of services offering technical support and hardware maintenance that will range from basic return and repair, all the way up to a managed fleet of equipment where support is provided as a service, according to a defined service level agreement (SLA).

Many broadcasters still rely on their legacy equipment as the centrepiece of their operations. Risks to operations are increasing as this older generation hardware is needed beyond its traditional support cycle. Broadcasters need service and support solutions that help them to safeguard

their systems until they are ready to make the jump to an IP-based network. Such a service and support program would make companies more comfortable, enabling them to make a slower, managed transition from a technology architecture standpoint, as well as giving them more control over structuring the investment needed for new technology.

Typically, a customer today will have a network which is tuned to their operational requirements. Some equipment may be getting older, and those parts of the system may need to be replaced sooner rather than later. To do that, they must be confident that they will have support for the entire system, not just the newer components.

What they are looking for is a contract that will cover the complete platform, throughout the transition. This is a reoccurring message that is being heard throughout the media industry, worldwide.

A partnership between Imagine and Fortress, called Imagine Service Fortress, which launched at the 2019 NAB Show, is a natural solution to meet today’s media industry challenges. Both companies have a global reach and can deliver the required level of support to any broadcaster. The new maintenance package provides multi-vendor hardware support and service for almost any vendor product, through a single point of contact.

The goal is to provide certainty around equipment performance. That, in turn, will ensure operational costs are more predictable and will avoid the need to make distress purchases for failing equipment. This measure will help cut costs and allow for better equipment lifecycle management.

Meeting this goal provides real reassurance that there is a practical path which suits broadcasters’ needs. They do not need to have the budget or resources of a global player to manage a big-bang changeover. They can choose their own route to the inevitable software-defined architectures, do it at their own pace, and be confident in the knowledge that the technology they rely on every day will be secure. ■