

Al Araby TV Network Partners with Telestream for Headquarters Relocation

Author/Owner: Tahir Mehmood (Tmqtar) on 14 October 2020. This image file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license.

THE CUSTOMER

Launched in January 2015 in London, Al Araby is a general public television network broadcasting a variety of programs and news shows in Arabic, covering society, politics, and culture for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

Al Araby TV Network is owned by Arab media investment company Fadaat Media, which aspires to play a leading role in media production, new media and social media services. Fadaat Media, the Qatari company that also owns the pan-Arab daily Al Araby al-Jadeed ('The New Arab') and its online editions, aims to create an enlightened and open-minded public awareness and establish effective communication channels between people.

In 2021 the shareholders' committee of Al Araby, in consultation with its board of directors and executive management, decided to move the broadcaster's headquarters from London to Lusail City in Qatar to better serve its Arabic-speaking audience. In January 2022 the broadcaster launched a second channel Al Araby 2, with the existing Al Araby TV channel becoming Al Araby: News.

Lusail is a planned city located on the coast, just north of the capital Doha. The Lusail Stadium is the largest arena for FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, with a capacity of 80,000, and will host ten matches including the Final. It is also the site of the Formula One race track, and the First Doha Grand Prix was held there in 2021.

THE SOLUTION

The new broadcast center in Lusail City is, where possible, based on an IP infrastructure, predominantly 25Gb with some 40Gb used in high volume areas. Around 10% of the system still relies on SDI routing. For example, feeds from several of the 35 cities Al Araby: News reports from arrive via satellite -- although a planned second phase of the relocation project is set to convert these feeds to IP as well. With this move and migration of capabilities, the Al Araby team knew they would require a hybrid workflow to support both IP and SDI infrastructure.

"We have confidence that a big part of our infrastructure will be dealt with professionally and with excellent support, as Telestream understands exactly the type of demanding workflows that are involved in a news environment. Telestream acted as true partners on this project – not just equipment suppliers."

Ali Hussein

Al Araby Director of Broadcast Operations & Creative Services

Now, with more than 400 media staff, Al Araby is one of the largest TV networks in the MENA region. "When we started planning the technical fit-out of the project we had no hesitation, when doing the high-level technical design, to rely heavily on Telestream products," says Al Araby Director of Broadcast Operations & Creative Services Ali Hussein.

"In Doha it was a no-brainer to have a partner like Telestream with us. We are building one of the largest-scale IP installations in the Middle East," says Hussein. "Perhaps in Europe and the United States this type of installation is more commonly implemented, but in the Middle East it is still limited. So it really gives us confidence to have a partner like Telestream in our infrastructure – and we've expanded the use of their solutions to timing, monitoring, video file handling, video archive and content management."

Al Araby needed highly reliable PTP timing, so they ordered a system consisting of Telestream SPG8000 Sync Pulse Generators and ECO8000 automatic changeover devices to serve as the Grandmaster and follower timing generators in both their studio and SDI areas. Telestream Sync Pulse Generators provide highly accurate, stable, and reliable timing in both SDI and IP broadcast facilities. The family of SPG and ECO products are the globally trusted sync solution for broadcasting and production environments around the globe.

"We ordered the SPG system early, as it is at the core of the infrastructure," says Hussein. "Global supply chain issues caused delays in supply of these critical system elements, but Telestream worked as a true partner to expedite delivery and keep our project on schedule." (Continued on next page)

THE SOLUTION (CONTINUED)

Telestream PRISM waveform monitors are used in every technical area, edit suite, Master Control Room (MCR) and in Transmission at Al Araby. “IP is still new, and it can be complicated,” he says. “We needed waveform monitors that support both IP and SDI, and that are flexible enough to be used in different locations. PRISM was 100% compliant with our requirements for operational and technical areas: accuracy, reported data, and the flexibility of the profiles.”

“We were happy,” says Hussein. “By having a confident partner like Telestream, it gives us the confidence that whatever problems we might face they are committed to helping us -- to spend the time to find and develop a solution.

“Content management is a core element of the Al Araby system. There is an existing content archive in London, and this will be migrated to a new on-premise storage system in Doha. Telestream DIVA is a critical part of the system, enabling migration of the existing content whilst maintaining continuing operations from London and Doha.

“We are already well-established with our own archive and our own DIVAs in London,” says Hussein. “At a certain point we need to migrate our content into the new products. This is something we’re looking forward to working on with Telestream: how we’re going to migrate this data, and how to create automated workflows to extract the right metadata for easier searching.

In the second phase of the relocation project Hussein and his team will tackle the integration of cloud-based services with existing workflows. “We will look at DIVA to migrate existing archives to some kind of cloud storage: both the new local on-premise archive in Doha, which will be migrated from London to Doha, and then also from Doha as a secondary copy for long-term preservation into the cloud.”

Al Araby has also deployed a centralized Telestream Vantage Media Processing platform – three nodes running on Telestream Lightspeed G8 servers -- for all aspects of its file-based media workflows, from content ingest to Avid news systems, encoding of finished content for broadcast, online and OTT delivery, as well as preparation of content for archives.



Lightspeed Server

Vantage services provide media capture, transcoding, media metadata processing, media analysis and content assembly.

Vantage connectors enable seamless, API-level integration with third-party systems. Lightspeed Live Capture allows users to check captured assets (even if they’re still capturing) directly into Avid or Adobe-based NLE systems. Whether editors are using Interplay, Media Composer or Adobe CS, they can grab growing files captured by Lightspeed Live Capture and begin editing right away.

“Vantage and Lightspeed are my favorite products! I’ve been using Vantage since 2010. At that time, this layer of workflow orchestration, transcoding and end-to-end media handling, it was like something we could only dream about. In my honest opinion, for anyone who wants to build a robust workflow for video handling and transcoding, especially in multiple formats, the answer will be Vantage. It adds value to fast-paced environments like news and sports, allowing us to produce multiple formats quickly and easily. And when we need to make changes, we just draw a new workflow on the Vantage workflow designer.”

Ali Hussein

Al Araby Director of Broadcast Operations & Creative Services



Vantage Media Processing and Workflow Automation

THE RESULTS

“On a personal level I have been a heavy user of Telestream for the last 15 years and in my opinion, if you want to build a decent, sustainable, rock-solid news channel, you have to consider a wide array of Telestream products as an essential part of your infrastructure – especially since the acquisition of DIVA and Tek Video into the company,” concludes Hussein. “We have confidence that a big part of our infrastructure will be dealt with professionally and with excellent support, as Telestream understands exactly the type of demanding workflows that are involved in a news environment. Telestream acted as true partners on this project – not just equipment suppliers,” he says.

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