

FlipFactory and Launch

Telestream products allow Azteca America to automate news workflow and streamline delivery

BY MARCO A. RIVERA

Azteca America is the fastest growing Hispanic network in the United States, providing programming to 60 affiliates in major Hispanic markets across the country. Last year, we were asked to produce local news for some of the affiliates in Texas and Nevada. We already had the production facilities at our NOC in California. However, we needed a solution to quickly and efficiently move content between locations for newsgathering as well as news delivery back to the local stations.

The solution

Important selection criteria included the ability to automatically integrate with our news systems, provide important VC-1 and MPEG-2 format support, and meet our tight delivery deadlines. After looking at expensive satellite and fiber solutions, we turned to Telestream and local reseller Key Code Media, who tailored an Internet delivery solution to meet our exact needs at a fraction of the cost. We purchased and deployed Telestream's FlipFactory server-based workflow automation application and multiple Launch personal IP media delivery software licenses to provide the workflow solution we needed.

Local reporters now capture and edit news stories on laptops outfitted with a wireless card, Avid editing software and Telestream media delivery software. The laptop setup provides ultimate flexibility in terms of



Cameraman/editor Jose Salvador Rico edits a local news story.

being able to send a reporter submit all types of news pieces, anywhere there is breaking news. including B-rolls, sound bites Launch software allows us to and full tracks. Material can be



Avid technician Aldo Necco monitors incoming news feeds on the FlipFactory server at the Azteca America NOC.

submitted from any location that has an Internet connection, and transmission costs run about \$50 per month.

The editor simply exports a QuickTime reference file to the media delivery folder. Launch automatically transcodes news content to SMPTE VC-1 at 2Mb/s and transmits media via the Internet directly to a FlipFactory server at our NOC.

We use VC-1 encoding at 2Mb/s because we've found that this combination is the sweet point in terms of quality and the amount of time it takes to send a news story. VC-1 is important because it provides full-resolution interlaced video, which looks very good on television. Below 2Mb/s, the video breaks up. At 2Mb/s, a full two-minute news story takes about 10 to 12 minutes to send to our broadcast server ready for air, making it the perfect bit rate for news.

FlipFactory provides the glue between the outside world and the inside world at our NOC. Everything that is delivered to the station via the Internet automatically goes through the

workflow automation server. Telestream's enterprise-class system is completely wide open and cross-platform, supporting automatic transcoding and file transfer between virtually any format and device. FlipFactory is a workhorse; we've never had to power it down.

We use the same workflow automation system to deliver material out from our NOC. Once local news stories are produced and ready to air, they are sent to FlipFactory for encoding to MPEG-2 at 5Mb/s. Files are automatically delivered to the affiliates' FTP servers for direct insertion into the playout server, ready to air. Higher-speed Internet lines are used for delivery back to the affiliates to avoid bottlenecks. A 22-minute program is delivered in just 16 minutes.

File-based delivery works

We're doing things today that a few years ago would only have been done by the very large networks. Next-tier networks like Azteca America are now taking advantage of the same technologies and workflows. We prefer

file-based delivery over satellite or video feeds because files carry metadata, making them ready for direct delivery to our server system. Plus, files enable the process to be completely automated. Low-cost media delivery applications enable independent videographers and reporters to inexpensively submit stories to the networks — the majority of which already own FlipFactory for automated ingest.

Turnaround of news programs has been quick and cost-effective. For the affiliates, it saves money because the technology is here to centrally produce the news stories. We provide all of the same advantages as centralcasting. Why build multiple newsrooms today when you only need one? Add Internet delivery, and you have a news workflow solution that is fast, reliable and inexpensive. **BE**

Marco A. Rivera is the chief technology officer at Azteca America.

For additional info, contact Telestream at 530-470-1300 or visit www.telestream.net