Globecast expands capacity with SES Video

Globecast has doubled its SES satellite capacity at the heart of North America’s cable neighbourhood to expand content distribution services to several US cable networks. As part of the new agreement, Globecast will utilise two additional transponders on the SES-3 satellite to deliver packaged programming. The company also renewed a 36MHz transponder on the SES-3, its fourth transponder on the Centre of the Arc cable distribution platform, which is home to media companies such as Discovery, Scripps Networks Interactive, HSN and Viacom.

BBC News employs Newtec’s Dialog

BBC News has adopted Newtec’s Dialog multi-service platform for its provision of IP connectivity over satellite. The deployment will allow the BBC’s news team to use mobile solutions that are capable of transmitting video, voice, files and general broadband services. Hans Massart (pictured), market director, broadcast, Newtec, said: “The possibility for BBC News to choose ad hoc from a combination of satellite, cellular, Wi-Fi or Ethernet IP connectivity, provides them with more tools to establish a flexible way of delivering more content from more locations and vantage points.”

For decades, the use of satellite for newsgathering has been the dominant delivery platform for live TV news. But with the convenience cellular technology offers, is satellite still relevant to newsgathering? Josephine Tan finds some answers.

News plays a purposeful role in people’s daily lives. It provides people with noteworthy information and groundbreaking announcements about current events taking place across the globe. Traditionally, news is predominantly delivered on print and TV. It then entered the age of Internet, where several news websites are created to provide supplemental or follow-up reports as the story continues to develop.

And as people’s daily lives now revolve around scrolling down their timelines on Facebook or Twitter, these social media and video streaming platforms are becoming their first point of contact when it comes to breaking news. The breaking news market, to a degree, might not be exclusive to TV, and has been partially replaced by social media platforms for distribution of information.

Cameron O’Neill, director, Asia-Pacific, Riedel Communications, tells APB: “In the past, if something noteworthy happened, a witness would have to report it to a news source, who would then have to dispatch someone to the scene. But now those original witnesses are the newsgatherers because they can now post a video on any platform, which will then quickly find its way into the traditional news media. For broadcasters, they have to be prepared to react at a pace never seen before.”

Agreeing with O’Neill’s point on the shift towards video streaming and social media platforms, Rob Cerbone, vice-president and general manager, media services, Intelsat, says: “Rapidity, agility and flexibility are key to capture this new segment of the market, across all platforms — TV, tablets or PCs — and broadcasters need to develop new business models positioning them on this platform mix.”

Stressing that traditional TV broadcasting remains strong, Cerbone adds that the quality and timeliness of live reporting are crucial for broadcasters to deliver a relevant product, hence professional journalism for the coverage of breaking news is irreplaceable.

He explains: “Newsgathering trucks, equipped with conventional satellite, remains, however, the most reliable option for broadcasters who need to reach a broad audience in a breaking news environment where other resources may be highly congested or contended.”

For instance, he points out that the surge in online video traffic often leads to crashing, buffering, slow start-up time and latency compared to broadcast feeds. The Internet, according to Cerbone, is not designed to accommodate these traffic surges and the resulting strain on the terrestrial networks translates to a poor viewing experience.
Satellite and technologies co-exist

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Combining IP solutions empower broadcasters to upgrade their SNG trucks from SD to HD, or from HD to 4K/Ultra HD (UHD), without the need for additional satellite spectrum. In addition to ensuring better utilisation of existing Capex and Opex SNG resources, LiveU’s hybrid technology allows users to use cellular at high priority, and automatically adds bandwidth from the satellite segment as needed.

The all-IP hybrid solution comprises portable and rack-mount LiveU encoders, satellite modems, and the LiveU roof-mounted Xtender with multiple cellular connections. One Chinese TV station, Shenzhen Media Group (SZMG), has deployed LiveU’s LL700 encoder and Xtender together with satellite transmission.

Chief Technical Officer office, LiveU, says: “Nonetheless, satellite is fairly strong in places with poor cellular coverage or are more traditional in their approach; however, these areas are becoming fewer and fewer.” LiveU has also recently entered into a partnership with the Associated Press (AP) for the launch of AP Live Community, a live video content and service exchange platform for global news gathering. Combining AP’s global news network with LiveU’s technologies, the online platform expedites live coverage of breaking news and events in any location by connecting live video publishers and contributors around the world.

Paul Shenley, director of business development and partnerships at AP, says: “AP Live Community builds on AP’s expertise in live video coverage through our Global Media Services, giving news organisations, broadcasters, digital publishers and corporate users of live video content the ability to commission live video coverage worldwide.”

“As demand for live content increases, this platform eliminates the complexity broadcasters currently face in having to source video production crews who are able to competently deliver live coverage. And because the AP Live Community platform provides automatic pairing, receiving the live transmission is hassle-free.”

AP Live Community, which is free to access, enables publishers to offer their consumers a wide range of live content, including events they otherwise may not have been able to cover, and those where a live feed is needed immediately. The platform also allows service providers the opportunity to pitch content or, with LiveU’s cloud-based technology facilitating content sharing, increase their revenues by offering their content to multiple publishers simultaneously.

For Riedel, the company foresees the development of 4G and 5G technologies offering “some interesting possibilities” for remote news gathering, but at the same time maintains the stand that traditional SNG will still have its role to play in the broadcast ecosystem.

O’Neill concludes: “We’ve got a few customers now who are using our combined Artist and MediorNet systems in their SNG trucks. Together, these systems allow for a single operator to communicate with their MCR (master control room), set up their video router and processing, and interact with the crew on the scene.

“The features are available directly over a single platform, from video or audio routing to on-the-spot video transport. These are all interlinked, allowing users to set up once and go live. In news, being first is important, and the time spent in reconfiguring the unit is time that journalists are not gathering news.”

LiveU has developed an integrated satellite and cellular solution, which comprises portable and rack-mount LiveU encoders, satellite modems, and the LiveU roof-mounted Xtender with multiple cellular connections.

While 4G and 5G connectivity might offer some really interesting possibilities for remote news gathering, traditional SNG is still going to be with us for a while.

— Cameron O’Neill, Director, Asia-Pacific, Riedel Communications

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breaking news