France Télévisions

Rapid deployment of Nevion’s market leading media services management system enabled France Télévisions to take full control of its 100+ connected contribution sites—seamlessly.

Introduction
The French national public broadcaster, France Télévisions, was looking to migrate its contribution network from SD to HD broadcasts, while using its existing network infrastructure. The company decided to change its supplier of encoders and, as a result, needed a new management system capable of supporting both new and existing equipment.

The Situation
France Télévisions’ migration to HD using the same contribution network would not have been possible without better encoding (compression), as the bandwidth between its locations is very constrained—at times as low as 10 Mbits. For that reason, France Télévisions decided to migrate from MPEG-2 (H.262) gateways to MPEG-4 (H.264) gateways, and chose to change suppliers in the process.

In doing so, France Télévisions needed to address the fact that its existing media services management system was bespoke and closely tied to the 3rd party hardware in use for SD transmission, and therefore could not be readily used with the new HD gateways.

Challenge
For the broadcasters, the network costs associated with reliably transporting the live HD feeds from Beaver Creek back to Germany were obviously a prime concern. They needed to find a solution that was optimum in terms of balancing high image quality, low latency and minimum bandwidth usage. They identified H.264 encoding as the best option for this.

To help achieve their high service goals at low network costs, broadcasters realized that the encoders then needed would also have to offer high density, flexibility and built-in network aggregation. A highly efficient error correction and concealment were also important features for uninterrupted broadcasting.

The decision of which H.264 solution to go with was an extremely important one for both companies as the Alpine World Ski Championships were potentially the first of many live sports events that were to be covered using that equipment.

The Solution
Nevion rose to the challenge and provided France Télévisions with its media service management solution VideoIPath, along with drivers for the equipment that needed to be supported. The software is installed on a main server and a back-up server, located in two separate sites in Paris. Data is replicated between these two servers and a “heartbeat” system means the system will never suffer any downtime. A virtual IP access ensures the switch between main and fail-over servers is invisible to the users.

VideoIPath is used for service fulfilment (configuring ad-hoc links) as stipulated by France Télévisions. It is also used for service assurance purposes by monitoring these ad-hoc links.

In this deployment VideoIPath is integrated with the MPEG-2 and MPEG-4 media gateways from the two third-party suppliers, managing not only provisioning but also reporting their status back to the users in the form of alarms correlated to the services affected.
Other significant features include tight access control for source/destination resources, integrated GoE monitoring using thumbnails for visual confirmation and management of compatible profiles for encoding/decoding resources.

The VideoIPath solution went live in early February 2015 and is being used daily to set up over 150 1-to-1 and 1-to-many links. The solution manages the network capacity and if a link is requested for a time for which no capacity is available, the solution will suggest the closest alternative time to the user.

**The Result**

By using VideoIPath to automate IP's often complex media transport provisioning processes, France Télévisions continues to benefit from fast set-up times ensuring rapid time to delivery as well as proactive problem identification and resolution.

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As VideoIPath is an off-the-shelf solution designed to be easy to use, even by non-experts, it enables capital and operating expenditure to be reduced. In the case of France Television, the company no longer needed its costly outsourced support that had been in place for the previous management system.

With a carefully planned roll-out and the help of its local partner, Euplink, Nevion was able to deliver the project within the specified four months. This involved the training of fifty key users who where then able to pass on their expertise and knowledge to other relevant individuals. There were also a number of managed regional trials and load testing carried out to ensure the system was as robust as possible. Once everything was in place and there was utmost confidence in the system, the switch over between the two systems was carried out overnight.

The transition was such a success that France Televisions decided to accelerate the entire migration of the underlying equipment from SD to HD.

**Why Nevion**

France Télévisions’ selected Nevion’s media management solution as it cost effectively combines advanced transport hardware for contribution-quality video transport with comprehensive end-to-end control, monitoring and management.

The COTS nature of VideoIPath’s fully integrated system, its flexible configuration of services—suitable for non-expert operators—plus its support for 3rd party equipment were also attractive features of the solution.

Nevion and Euplink's identification of France Televisions' needs, its swift and efficient transition with no disruption to its users and on going support were also seen as significant benefits.

“We wanted a proven out-of-the-box product that would simplify the management of our extended network. After extensive evaluation with the support of Euplink, we found that Nevion’s VideoIPath best met our requirements.”

Arnaud Kotlarczik
Project Director at France Télévisions