



For Immediate Release

aQ Broadcast Provides Centralised Video Solution for 3M Campus

Reading, UK, 25 June 2014 – 3M's sprawling headquarters in Minnesota's Twin Cities hosts the company's central engineering, sales and marketing activity. As such, there is a lot of video moving in a lot of different directions: at any point during the day at least one of the campus's 18, fibre-connected venues is in use, whether for a new product rollout, presentation of new branding, or the latest accounting numbers. In fact, in the last year these venues have hosted about 900 individual events. Neal Thomas, Chief Engineer at 3M Media Solutions, has to manage the content that plays to, is recorded from, or is distributed between, all of these locations.

3M Media Solutions recently charged aQ Broadcast with improving the way this video content and activity is managed. Previously, the machine racks were full of standalone, portable media player/recorders, each with its own local storage. While machine control of all these devices was centralised, the storage for the actual content was not. Instead, these files had to be pulled manually from each of the units via removable hard drives and then copied to local network drives for distribution. "We never really intended for things to work that way," said Thomas. "But the system sort of grew, over time, out of necessity. Before we knew it, we had a stack of these player/recorders, and we were getting a lot of exercise running around with the portable flash drives that live on those units."

Thomas wanted to upgrade the facility to house a central collection of recorder and playout ports, all attached to a single volume of fully-redundant central storage, accessible to editors and other creative employees for repurposing. He also, however, wanted to be able to access the video server's transport functions from anywhere in the facility. aQ Broadcast's Video Server platform served as a perfect, and inexpensive, solution for such a requirement.

"A centralised system makes everything easier" said Thomas. "If you just look at the number of devices now in the rack, you can see this is a far more efficient way to work."

aQ Broadcast, in conjunction with AVI-SPL Minneapolis, employed an array of Port (I/O) and Storage servers to provide eight ports of HD input/output capability tied to a 32TB, RAID-6 media server. Isolating the ports in their own server hardware ensured that general network activity wouldn't risk interrupting activity on the I/O ports. The

resilient, Linux-based hardware was also an ideal match for 3M's existing networking infrastructure.

Owing to aQ Broadcast's wide support of codecs and file formats, 3M Media Solutions were easily able to arrive at a codec/format combination that worked well with their existing Adobe Premiere editing stations – in this case they elected to use MPEG-4 clips in a Quicktime wrapper. But the considerable flexibility of the aQ hardware means that the facility can now also play back almost any clip brought in from the outside – without first having to transcode to a standard format.

Local control takes place within the fully configurable and editable aQ Video Server GUI. But most of the time, 3M Media Solution's staff accesses the server from Windows laptops running aQ's Flexible Media Controller (FMC). The FMC provides a way to bring the entire video server interface to any number of remote Windows or Linux machines. The interface on each client machine is independently configurable, and allows an operator to grab control of any asset and and/or port, enabling total control from anywhere on campus.

The Flexible Media Controller was a surprise for Thomas. "The FMC delivered functionality far above what I had initially specified. We never really expected to have this level of portable integration, and it has made us all far more productive." Neil Hutchins, aQ Broadcast's CEO, notes that the 3M installation was one in a group of corporate projects that the company had been involved with. "We have worked with a number of large US-based corporate customers recently and in each case the flexibility of our solution has ensured a perfect match for their differing requirements." He added "We are delighted that the aQ Video Server hardware and FMC software has exceeded 3M's expectations for this project."

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About aQ Broadcast:

aQ Broadcast Limited was established in 2013 after a management buyout of the workflow division of Autocue and is now the only British company to design, develop, build and support scripting, newsroom, automation and media management software alongside video server and production suite hardware. aQ Broadcast is headquartered in the Thames Valley, UK, with a US office based in Boston.

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Image: https://www.dropbox.com/s/uafb3g8qlgrbbqo/3M_cropped.jpg

Image caption: 3M Media Solutions Technical Coordinator Marilyn Cook controls the aQ Broadcast system from 3M's head-end facility