Ascend

EDnet

User Profile

In the high-stakes film and recording industries, scheduling and travel commitments can make pulling together creative talents a logistical nightmare. The industry needed a way to enable jet-set entertainers who are often miles apart to collaborate remotely on projects. A systems integrator called Entertainment Digital Network (EDnet) had the vision to rise to the challenge, creating an innovative telecommunications network powered by Ascend solutions. The technology created quite a stir in Hollywood again this year, when Disney Studios employed it to help produce their animated "Hercules" blockbuster .

Prior to EDnet, creative directors, producers and talent had to be in the same place, at the same time, in order to hold a recording session. EDnet's system needed to be robust enough to exchange production-quality audio and versatile enough to set up quickly and reliably.

"Our customers depend on us to provide the services we've promised them, so it's important that we select equipment we feel confident with," explains David Gustafson, EDnet's chief operating officer and vice president of marketing and sales.

Building a Global Recording Village

EDnet designed its network based on digital dial-up services from long distance carriers and regional phone companies. Leveraging these phone services, recording studios can transmit broadcast-quality audio over temporary high-bandwidth connections at economical rates. The system is changing the way entertainers do business and reducing the constraints of money and scheduling has helped foster a fertile collaborative environment.

For example, top recording artists like Frank Sinatra and Peter, Paul and Mary have used EDnet to do album projects for record producer Phil Ramone. Instead of traveling to Ramone's project studio in Bedford, New York, the artists recorded their albums remotely from studios in Miami, New York, London and Hollywood, saving both time and travel expenses.

Among the equipment EDnet uses to manage these studio connections is Ascend's Multiband™ VSX BRI bandwidth-on-demand controllers. "We chose Ascend's Multiband product because it's number one in reliability and to us it's an industry standard," explains Gustafson.

When it was founded in 1992 by employees of Skywalker Sound, a division of LucasArts Entertainment Company, EDnet had just a handful of users. Today, the network has grown to more than 400 domestic affiliates and 200 international associates scattered throughout Canada, Europe and the Pacific Rim.

ASCEND

The Ascend Solution



Multiband Plus

The Multiband Plus is the industry's best-selling inverse multiplexer. The unit comes standard with multiple wide area network interfaces for ISDN BRI, ISDN PRI, T1 or Switched 56 and four serial interfaces that can connect directly to application equipment such as audio or video codecs.



Multiband VSX BRI

The Multiband VSX BRI is a cost-effective, notebook-sized inverse multiplexer that extends your corporate videoconferencing network to remote sites using ISDN BRI circuits. Its bandwidth-on-demand capabilities let you to operate your video network at substantial savings by using only the bandwidth that is needed.

EDnet was the first to use the Multiband VSX for this type of audio application. The base unit lets users set up a recording session over two BRI lines at 256 Kbps and its bandwidth capacity can be increased to 512 Kbps by adding an expansion module that supports more BRI lines. Affiliates only pay for the bandwidth they need, when they need it.

EDnet's cutting-edge system has been employed with equal success by film-makers. In early 1997, Disney Studios used EDnet's system to connect three film studios together for soundtrack mix approvals for their "Hercules" feature. During the week-long sessions, Disney executives in both Burbank and the New York Disney screening room viewed the film while listening to six channel CD-quality mixes coming from Lucasfilm in Northern California.

Ascend's bandwidth-on-demand controllers were used for almost all of the connections involved with the six-channel three-way bridge. The Lucasfilm site employed an Ascend MAX™ unit to handle traffic on a Primary Rate ISDN (PRI) line provided by EDnet. At their network hub in San Francisco, EDnet used a combination of Ascend Multiband Plus and VSX units on both PRI and BRI lines to handle the 37 B-channel calls used to facilitate the session. Multiband Plus units at the remote sites received the calls. The combination of Dolby Fax audio compression and EDnet's bridging saved the executives time, travel and money.

According to Gustafson, both the Multiband units in San Francisco and the ones in the field have been easy to set up and maintain.

"When you're dealing with a complex network like ours, lots of problems come up. But dealing with Ascend is a delight because their equipment is nearly problem-free."

Gustafson also likes the fact that Multiband products conform to BONDING standards so they can interoperate with other vendors' multiplexers.

A Bright Future

As members of the professional recording community become increasingly aware of EDnet's potential, its popularity is exploding. By the end of the year, Gustafson predicts that the number of affiliates in EDnet's global recording village will reach more than 500. The reasons are obvious: leveraging EDnet's environment of "virtual ubiquity" makes economic sense for affiliates and, more importantly, it empowers them to work with the most appropriate talent, regardless of location.

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