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MEDIA RELEASE

South Gauteng installs video conference in High Court

Questek Advanced Technologies has recently installed a new video conferencing communications solution in the South Gauteng High Court that sees greater efficiencies in judicial proceedings, cost savings and drastically improves security.

Working with Electrical Engineer Dave Warren of D. Warren & Associates who designed the system, Questek supplied, installed and configured the equipment that would allow the Department of Justice to operate in a more safe, efficient and transparent manner. The Department needed to speed up the process of court cases, while keeping potentially dangerous criminals behind bars, instead of transporting them from the prisons, to the courts. The following criteria needed to be met:

1. Normal court room operations: Recording of all the cameras and microphones in the room, in real-time, time and date stamped on a per court room and court case basis.
2. Video Conference (VC) operation: In this case the video conference system is added as an additional input which also needs to be recorded.
3. The system must be able to switch between the two scenarios seamlessly, since the court will only activate the VC operation on a “need to have” basis when expert opinion, or a witness in a remote location is required to testify.
4. The system will be managed by the Clerk of the Court, including distribution of images to all screens, sound levels, recording functions etc.

The equipment supplied and installed by Questek, includes:

- 12 Sony 720p IP networked cameras
- 2 Sony PTZ IP networked cameras
- Seetec Enterprise Software.
- Auditel Envoy audio systems
- 2 Polycom HDX7000 dual camera Video Conference Systems
- 2 Extron control systems
- 24 Extron HDMI and USB CAT-5 extender systems
- Extron amplifiers and sound processors
- JBL speakers
- Shure wireless microphones
- Various Samsung and Hantarex screens
- And a lot of cabling, installation and programming

The Polycom HDX7000 Video Conference system installed in the court, communicates (video and audio) with a similar unit in the prison. So the prisoner never has to leave the confines of the prison. All the proceedings within the court, as well as the video conference communication, are captured, recorded, and stored for future reference.

People in the public gallery and press area can view all the proceedings on overhead screens mounted onto the ceiling bulkhead allowing them to get a close-up of the judges, the attorneys, defendants, witnesses etc, without having to leave their seats.

Should any relevant paperwork need to be displayed, and recorded, this is simply done by placing the printed material onto the document camera.

The other Sony cameras can be manually controlled, or pre-programmed to pan-tilt-zoom and focus onto specific positions in the courtroom, so that none of the court action is lost.

The Polycom video conference system can also communicate with other video conference systems, in other courts, in other cities, or even other countries if necessary. Witnesses and experts no longer need to travel thousands of kilometres to be part of the court case. Their evidence and their testimonials can all be presented, seen and heard locally. In addition, if necessary, any one of the attorneys present can question the person at the remote site making the process completely interactive.

All the equipment is controlled by the Clerk of the Court. It's high-tech, but the control system was programmed for ease-of-use, automating most of the required switching which needs to take place during court proceedings. In fact the only real intervention required is to start the court proceedings and conclude it at the end of the day. The Clerk of the Court does however have the facility to override the automatic control at any stage.

Every audio and video channel is recorded onto a state-of-the-art Raid server for future retrieval and review. At the end of the day's proceedings, the Clerk of the Court can provide the presiding Judge with a recording, on a USB stick, for review.

Questek Advanced Technologies are specialists in the integration, design and installation of innovative state-of-the-art audio visual solutions. Utilising convergence of voice, data and visual technologies, Questek creates the platform to manage and visually present knowledge in increasingly innovative ways.

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