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MEDIA RELEASE

QUESTEK'S VISUAL RADIO CHANGES THE MENTALITY OF LISTENERS

At IBC 2014, VidiGo's broadcast solutions were among the most talked-about offerings at the exhibition. When the show drew to a close, the Dutch-based company walked away with the IABM Design and Innovation Award for Best System Automation and Control for its Studio Automation solution. Software-based and designed with ease of use as a major priority, VidiGo's products and solutions have begun to develop a sizeable footprint across the globe.

VidiGo's offering consists of a handful of products that can be deployed in varying combinations and targeted solutions: Engine, a complete AV workflow manager; Live, a multicam live production suite; Toolbox, which enables the integration of any web or PC content into the broadcast environment; Graphics, enabling the creation of fast, high-quality graphics during production and broadcast; Social Media Hub, an add-on for Graphics and Live to allow the incorporation of social media into broadcast; Visual Radio, which utilises automation and graphics to add visual elements to radio broadcasts, and the award-winning Studio Automation.

'Changing the mentality of video production'

Among those production and broadcast operators who are putting VidiGo solutions to good use, is Primedia Broadcast, the company behind radio stations 94.7, KFM, Cape Talk and 702, as well as the online news platform, Eyewitness News (EWN). At its hub in Sandton, Primedia uses VidiGo to drive its visual radio work on 94.7 and 702, as well as its EWN news and talk studio.

The recent addition of VidiGo to Primedia's operations has changed the way the company, which is primarily concerned with radio, thinks about the creation of video content. According to Chief Operations Officer Ryan Till, much of what they do with VidiGo would not have been possible four or five years ago. The product has been deployed at the company's Sandton headquarters in the 94.7 and 702 studios, with three-camera set-ups to capture visuals from the main desks, as well as specially designated interview or performance areas, with simple control rooms where the shows can be produced by single-person-operation thanks to the tools that VidiGo provides. Elsewhere in the building is the newly completed EWN studio, a compact production space that includes a news desk and two talk show style

set-ups. Fully automated, the studio requires no operators on set. It is configured for full single-person operation from the adjacent control room, using templates set up in the VidiGo system.

Since the content is created for web and mobile consumption rather than television, the emphasis is on generating and distributing the content as quickly as possible, rather than creating content that is technically perfect. The content is thus mixed live and then uploaded or streamed live. “Technology has enabled us to do that before without investing substantially more than I think would be reasonable for a radio broadcaster to invest in video content,” says Till. “It has fundamentally changed the mentality of video production in this business. Before VidiGo, our content producers wouldn’t even have worried about how to create live video content because it just wasn’t an option. Their roles have changed as they move towards this live mentality as they are now able to make things happen fast enough. It’s the technology that has led us to this point.”

The video creation process is heavily dependent on pre-production: the creation of templates in VidiGo, as well as careful planning of the content. Once these are in place, operating the system during the show is relatively easy. “Like any live show, you have to pre-produce well,” says content producer Ruth Edwards. “You need to know what your programme is going to be like during the show, what graphics will be required, what advertisers and sponsors need from a branding and graphics point of view.” Once these are in place, the videographer’s job during the show is essentially to remain watchful and know which button to push, when.

The graphics aspect of VidiGo is not only a great resource from an aesthetic and information point of view, it allows producers to add value for clients, through branding and advertising opportunities. Currently Primedia offers this value-adds for its clients but the possibility exists for producers to monetise such offerings.

Reduced turnaround times, reduced costs

Another user of VidiGo’s solutions is Randburg-based convergence agency Don’t Look Down Productions. The company produces TV content for a number of DStv channels, stages big events with live multicam OB broadcasts and manages digital social media properties for a variety of DStv brands. It makes extensive use of VidiGo’s Graphics and Social Media Hub products, which it acquired in late 2014, for the social-to-TV content it produces. Executive creative director Anton Cloete explains:

“We deploy a variety of on-air systems for our social-to-TV productions, ranging from demanding solutions in both monetary and software development needs, to simple turnkey systems that provide our broadcast clients with display solutions at an affordable price. In VidiGo Graphics we found such a simple turnkey partner at a price point that no other solution could match. The solution is deployed on DStv youth properties, enabling us to produce moderated viewer comments to air from multiple platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, as well as manipulating the tool to produce simple line-ups for the evening’s schedule.”

Aside from the price point, Don’t Look Down, like Primedia saw value in the ability that VidiGo provides to create simple templates that make the on-air workflow much simpler. Cloete says: “the VidiGo solution has provided us with a simple composition tool for social-to-TV, enabling us to get simple moderated content to air faster and more cost-effectively than ever before. Prior to this solution the lead time in getting our clients on air would be months. This has been reduced to weeks.”

Primedia’s experience with VidiGo solutions seems to agree with that of Don’t Look Down. “Presets, formats, templates – these are all very much a part of what VidiGo offers us,” says Till. “You can do basic things quickly. Once your pre-production is in place, you need to be able to literally flick a switch and go. That turnaround that VidiGo has enabled for us is very important.”

As these testimonials suggest, VidiGo offers highly cost-effective solutions that ease production workflows, allow for quick turnaround times and help producers create a high-quality product. The solutions are still relatively new to South Africa but if the experience of these users is anything to go by, seems likely to become a popular choice in the country’s broadcast industry.

VidiGo solutions are distributed and serviced in South Africa by Questek Advanced Technologies. For more information call 011 706 0405, or visit www.questek.co.za.

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.

Issued by Questek Advanced Technologies

George van Gils

Director