

## **IBC Innovation Awards – sample entry**

[Please note that this is a dummy entry about a completely fictional project for a fictional client by fictional vendors. It is intended to give an idea of the sort of detail that is likely to catch the eye of the judges and make for a successful nomination]

### **Title of project**

Remote collaborative news production at Alpha Broadcasting

### **Award category**

Content Creation

### **Company submitting this entry**

Beta Systems Integrators

### **End user**

Alpha Broadcasting Corporation

### **Other technology partners**

Gamma Broadcast – cameras and fast turnaround editing

Delta News Production – editorial newsroom systems, content repurposing and asset management

Epsilon Technologies – SDI/IP conversion, video servers, video processing and multiviewers

### **Description**

As the leading source of news in its territory, Alpha Broadcasting Corporation has a reputation for both its news values – accuracy and timeliness – and for the quality of its presentation. It was one of the first to install an all-electronic newsroom with desktop editing for journalists to complete their own stories.

The pressure for extensive remote production and editing drove Alpha to plan a complete overhaul of its news production facilities. As well as completing the move to standards-based IP infrastructure, the global pandemic accelerated the demand to support journalists, editors and producers working wherever was convenient (and safe) for them, rather than forcing everyone into the newsroom.

Commercially, there was also a need to move from capital-based projects to an opex model. That suggested a move to a virtualised software architecture, with processing and storage in the cloud wherever practical. As well as opening up remote production, it would also enable seamless work between regional offices and the national headquarters, with automated, swift and seamless content transfers.

Beta Systems Integrators worked with Alpha, including collaborative design using Agile iterative project management and extensive prototyping. This allowed the team to move from a list of requirements to a detailed operational specification, and from this to a set of commitments on the performance of the delivered system.

This was a bold and innovative move: defining a contract for a major broadcast project not in terms of equipment but in terms of outcomes. Both client and lead contractor demonstrated mutual trust, as well as understanding, in setting out the project this way.

With the target performance regime established, Beta could complete the systems design.

The first key decision was to choose cameras from Gamma Broadcast. While there are a number of manufacturers providing HD camcorders suitable for ENG, the choice of the Gamma system was made because of its advanced IP connectivity, allowing metadata to be shared to make the production workflows more slick, along with integrated ethernet, Wifi and 5G for connectivity anywhere.

Content can now reach the newsroom production system in a range of IP formats, and as SDI for legacy users. Epsilon Technologies provided high performance SDI/IP conversion to convert everything to the house standard at the point of ingest, and manage content in a hybrid environment of on premises fast access storage, cloud working storage, and automated archiving of raw material and finished stories.

The fully virtualised software allows Alpha Broadcast to move processor-intensive applications to the cloud in busy times. Redundant, high bandwidth fibre connections are provided at the central newsroom and regional offices to ensure very high resilience.

Alpha Broadcasting was already a user of the Delta newsroom system, and to minimise the need for staff retraining it made sense to retain this proven platform. The project team worked closely together, though, to implement a range of new functionality in the newsroom which allows the journalist to create multiple versions of the same story quickly and seamlessly. It also allows social media messages to be generated from the same user interface.

Remote users can log on from anywhere – a regional office, home, a hotel room or a coffee shop – and access all the functionality of the newsroom. Machine learning is used to determine what content needs to be uploaded from the journalist or producer in the field, and what content should be transferred to help the journalist complete a story remotely. Proxy resolution material is always available, with full resolution content moved as bandwidth becomes available.

To publish the stories online, Epsilon developed a plug-in for the Gamma editor. Once the story is ready for online publishing, all that is needed is a single mouse click. The Epsilon plug-in collects all the resources it needs, renders it at the right resolutions for the all the outputs, harvests the appropriate metadata from the Delta newsroom system, and publishes it. Where content needs to be replaced – for instance, where Alpha has the broadcast but not online rights – then the Epsilon system performs the replacement seamlessly.

The system is currently scaled to support as many as 200 concurrent users. The virtualised software architecture means that those users can be at any location. Multiple fibre routes and ISPs ensure resilience.

Steve Andrews, the head of news at Alpha Broadcasting, said “This is a remarkable project for a number of reasons.

“First, there is the very special business relationship between the partners,” he explained. “Our contract with Beta Systems is expressed in terms of our operational needs, now and in the future. Their decision to work with us on this basis is what allowed us, and them, to come up with all the other innovative functionality we have incorporated.

“All the vendors who have supplied technology, and especially Gamma, Delta and Epsilon, have listened to our suggestions and implemented new features to do what we want,” he continued. “Their co-operation has been open and honest, and we could not have achieved our performance goals without it.

“We started with a challenging timeline, but the very special circumstances of 2021 meant that we pressed Beta and the team to move even faster,” he added. “They responded well to our demands, and delivered the key elements of remote production in mid-year, with the entire system implemented, commissioned and on air before the end of the year, while maintaining covid-safe working practices.

“This is a highly innovative, and as far as I know, unique project. On behalf of everyone at Alpha Broadcasting, I am delighted and honoured that Beta Systems has put us forward for the IBC2022 Innovation Awards.”

## **Summary**

This project demonstrates the best of software-centric broadcast technology, in a hybrid home/cloud, SDI/IP architecture. It brings together multiple vendors who have actively collaborated to combine the latest in broadcast and IT products and techniques. The result is a highly efficient, powerful and fast newsroom system which, through embedded remote capabilities, gives the journalists the agility to be first with the news.

The project also innovates in its contractual basis, being defined not by hardware, or inputs and outputs, but in terms of outcomes, and in particular that it should deliver the extended functionality with no penalty in terms of operation, speed or headcount.

**Supporting material**

Our supporting video features a set of graphic sequences demonstrating how the elements of the project work together, and some initial demonstrations of on-screen functionality.

If this project is selected for the shortlist it is our intention to shoot further video material showing the system in use. Steve Andrews, Head of News at Alpha Broadcasting, has indicated that he intends to be at IBC2022 and will accept the award should we be successful.