



Application Note

Ensuring business continuity in a broadcast environment

March 2011

A mission critical requirement for any media enterprise is cost-effective back-up operations.

The advent of the digital era has radically changed the nature and dynamics of the broadcast business landscape. More efficient and less bandwidth hungry digital transmission has enabled far more channels to go to air. This has increased channel choice to the point where consumers that 10 years ago could count their TV channel options on the fingers of two hands are now faced with tens or even hundreds of channels.

In this environment channel loyalty is difficult to maintain. Broadcasters are constantly striving to provide viewers with a service that meets their needs and differentiates them from other broadcasters. This channel proposition comprises several components, including high quality content, state-of-the-art features and functions and, critically, reliable assured continuity in service.

Channel loyalty is equally applicable to advertisers as it is to consumers. Today advertisers are spoilt for choice and the market has become highly competitive. In this environment, any perception that a broadcaster's output is anything less than 100 per cent reliable is dangerous.

One of the biggest commercial risks facing broadcasters is signal disruption, where the distribution of the content is affected due to technical failures. A mission critical requirement for any media enterprise is cost-effective back-up operations to ensure business continuity in the event of a major system failure.

Snell has identified business continuity as a focus for its research and development activity for many years. It uses its experience gained over 40 years working with some of the world's leading broadcasters to develop solutions that meet the needs of a wide range of broadcast media organizations from small regional stations to national broadcasters.

At the same time, Snell has looked at the fast evolving technology market and integrated some of the new generation of IT-based systems that empower a fresh approach to the long-standing business continuity challenge.

Morpheus provides assurance in an unpredictable world

So critical is business continuity that most broadcasters will establish an entirely separate site where they can switch operations to in the event of major systems failure at the primary broadcast site. However, once this site has been established there is the issue of harmonizing and synchronizing operations between the two sites.

Without the right degree of insight as to how these locations should integrate, the harmonizing of these separate facilities can become a major challenge. This is where Snell's mixture of industry experience and inventive approach pay dividends.

Snell has identified business continuity as a focus for its research and development activity for many years, its enterprise-scale automation solution provides full functionality between both a primary and remote site for a seamless transition in the event of a system failure.



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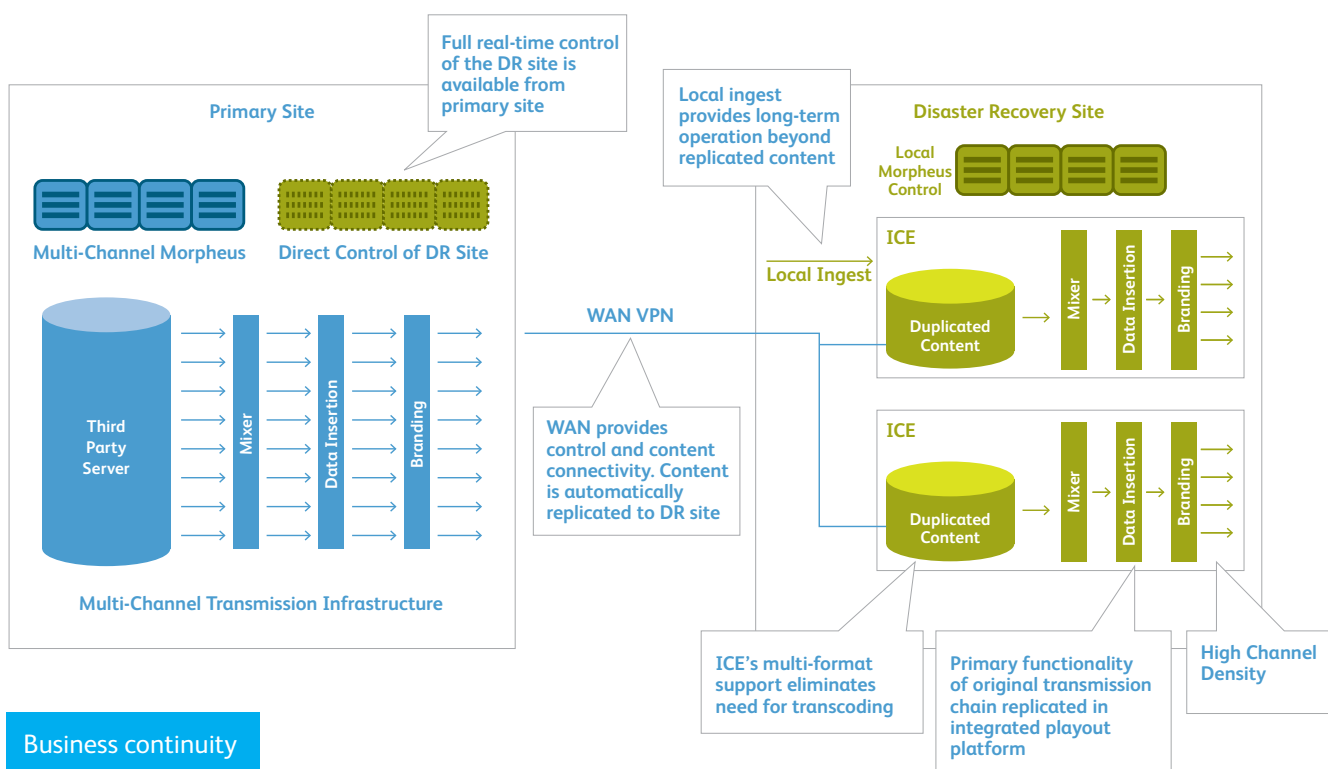
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Snell's enterprise-scale automation solution, Morpheus, provides full functionality between both the primary and the remote site. Content is not "ever-green" material but instead a mirrored output of the main broadcast signal. If a system failure occurs, a seamless transition can be made to ensure continued operation and complete transparency to the home viewer.

The illustrated example reflects a business continuity architecture where the primary site is managing multiple channels with direct control available for the disaster recovery (DR) site. If a system failure occurs at the primary site, the DR site takes over the primary role providing local storage and playout using Morpheus ICE (Snell's Integrated Content Engine). Content can continue to be ingested, branded and transmitted until the main site status is restored.

Snell has used its experience gained in over 40 years of working with some of the world's largest broadcasters.





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FOX Networks

US-based broadcast media organization, FOX Networks Engineering & Operations, selected Snell as its business continuity partner: it uses Morpheus Automation and Morpheus ICE for disaster recovery systems in California and Texas.

“Morpheus is an unusually powerful, flexible, and scalable broadcast automation solution that, with Morpheus ICE, provides both the system density and fully resilient architecture that our disaster recovery project requires,” said Richard Friedel, executive vice president and general manager, FOX Networks Engineering and Operations.

The Morpheus systems being used by FOX for disaster recovery are controlling a number of ICE units to mirror on-air playout and to perform baseband ingest when required. Supporting a fully mirrored 24/7 playout recovery model, the systems operate in the background, providing the ability to switch to backup operations at a moment’s notice with no inventory loss.

Rather than air evergreen programming or a day-of-air inventory in the event of channel failure, FOX will be able to switch the signal output instantly and seamlessly from its primary automation playout system to Morpheus.

Morpheus ICE brings together a video server, graphics, switchers, channel branding, captioning, and subtitling in a convenient 3RU package, all managed by Morpheus automation. ICE offers a low-cost solution for start-up channels as well as a cost-effective building block for distributed operations supporting activities such as regional program management and remote disaster recovery. The system works seamlessly with either SD or HD source material, managing all of the processes required to prepare pictures, sound, and ancillary data for the highest-quality HD playout.

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Richard Friedel, executive vice president and general manager, FOX Networks Engineering and Operations