

Case Study

WCPO-TV, a Television Pioneer, Moves Into the Digital Era with a “Smart” Infrastructure



Scripps adopts Snell’s IQ Modular infrastructure products for its new 70,000-square-foot facility in the Cincinnati’s historic Mt. Adams district.

The Customer

It was the summer of 1949 when WCPO-TV first went on the air in Cincinnati. Television broadcasting was in its infancy and programming was scarce. Being the pioneer that it was, the station created its own shows. Before long, WCPO was one of only two stations in the United States sending its programs to the networks for national rebroadcast.

In a short time, the station established itself as a leader in American broadcasting. WCPO was the first station in the country to launch an hour-long midday news broadcast. It also led the Cincinnati market with the first mobile reporting and videotaped interviews. The station created the first local investigative reporting unit and was a pioneer in offering live coverage of spot news—both from remote vans and later a jet helicopter.

In 2004, WCPO went through another major transformation by moving into a new 70,000- square-foot digital broadcast center in the city’s historic Mt. Adams district.

The Challenge

In WCPO’s move, the station faced a textbook challenge in how to embrace change in a positive way. Not only did Scripps executives want to enhance their broadcasting business immediately, they needed to ensure an orderly migration path to rapidly changing future television technology.

Control of the broadcast transition extended far beyond the immediate conversion from analog to digital technology. HDTV was right around the corner, while the move to file-based technology was only a few years beyond that. Futureproofing was the name of the game.

It became clear to WCPO’s engineers that they needed to create a fully modular, scalable “smart” broadcast infrastructure that could easily be adapted to changing requirements.

“With IQ Modular™, AF Associates put together a good design, we installed the equipment, and everything’s staying within tolerance,” said Joe Martinelli, director of engineering at WCPO-TV and WCPO-DT. “As director of engineering that means I don’t have to worry about it or babysit it, because its performance is so stable.”



Case Study

WCPO-TV, a Television Pioneer, Moves Into the Digital Era with a “Smart” Infrastructure

The Snell Solution

To ensure an orderly growth path to a fully digital, IT-based operation in the future, WCPO chose Snell's IQ Modular infrastructure components as a foundation for the new facility. “WCPO wanted an infrastructure that had a comprehensive command and control system of all modular equipment, and the Snell RollCall™ and RollMap™ monitoring systems provide this, with SNMP scalability for additional systems down the road,” said Tom Michales, senior project manager at Ascent Media Systems and Technology Services, formerly AF Associates, the systems integrator for WCPO's new plant.

WCPO's new facility provides twice as much control room facility space as its previous site in downtown Cincinnati. In this mostly tapeless environment, Snell's IQ Modular products represent the majority of the digital infrastructure. This includes the distribution amplifiers, SD-to-HD converters, analog-to-digital converters, and digital-to-analog converters. The IQ Modular products see particularly heavy duty in WCPO's ingest room, where they are used to convert analog satellite feeds for the station's digital video server.

The Results

WCPO successfully uses the RollCall and RollMap systems to monitor its IQ Modular products, check levels, and ensure that all the equipment is operating within tolerance. Each module identifies itself on the RollCall network and can be configured and monitored in multiple ways—from “virtual” devices such as simple D/A converters, image processors, or routers to vast internal component infrastructures of thousands of modules.

With RollCall and RollMap, WCPO has been able to install IQ Modular equipment at its remote transmitter site and have it monitored and managed from the station's main technical facility with minimal technical overhead. These factors, as well as the image quality, scalability, and cost-effectiveness of the IQ Modular system, were strategic in the decision-making process.

“With IQ Modular, AF Associates put together a good design, we installed the equipment, and everything's staying within tolerance,” said Joe Martinelli, director of engineering at WCPO-TV and WCPO-DT. “As director of engineering that means I don't have to worry about it or babysit it, because its performance is so stable.”

