

ITV Transition to Flexible Editing Suites



A new location created an opportunity to overhaul a workflow with flexible editing suites using Amulet Hotkey KVM extenders

Moving house is supposed to be one of life's most stressful events. Imagine the enormity of moving ITV from Quay Street in Manchester, home to some of the most iconic productions in UK broadcasting, to its new premises in Orange Tower, MediaCityUK.

The coordination required to move the production staff and infrastructure over a five month period while maintaining the facility's more than 15 hours of programming every week was extensive.

New Infrastructure and workflow to enhance collaboration

The fourth floor at the new home in Orange Tower was a clean sheet. The Central Apparatus

Room (CAR,) serving the facility demanded a reinforced floor to support more than 60 bays of equipment, and its location was therefore determined between the building cores. Apart from that limitation, the broadcaster was free to draw up its wish list.

ITV Technical Manager Taig McNab takes up the story.

"Given the physical constraints of the Quay Street building (it was a sprawling site where the production facility had organically expanded to cover every corner of the building across multiple floors,) we struggled at times to make best use of the space. We were determined to create a flexible and collaborative environment in our new home."

Customer profile



Company	ITV
Industry	Media & Entertainment
Country	United Kingdom
Statistics	£3.1B yearly revenue 6,120 employees
Website	www.itv.com

Business Need

Move production staff and infrastructure to new facility without interrupting weekly programming. Create clean, flexible and collaborative suites that avoid the clutter of function-specific hardware.

Solution

ITV and Root6 used Amulet Hotkey KVM extenders to centralize media workstations/systems and used Amulet Hotkey DXZ zero clients to connect to any workstation from any suite.

Results

There was a smooth transition to the new location which now gives uncompromised performance.

The editors and operators have access to the tools they need from any suite, which improves flexibility, collaboration, saves space and keeps noise out of the suites.

Solutions Featured

Amulet Hotkey KVM extenders and DXZ4 zero clients

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- Taig McNab, Technical Manager, 3sixtymedia, ITV

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“Apart from specific task spaces, for dubbing and grading for example, we were keen to make the working areas task unspecific and flexible. In that way we wouldn’t tie up suites for particular jobs. We also wanted a mix of daylight and controlled lighting suites – colourists tend to prefer the latter – so we also ensured all the picture finishing and grading areas were consistent in colour and lighting to create calibrated environments.”

“We consulted with both operators and producers on suite layout, discovering that many producers prefer to work alongside editors rather than at the traditional producer desk. Consequently we had AKA design some furniture which admirably meets this requirement.”

Amulet Hotkey KVM extenders enable any suite to access any workstation

ITV’s key consideration was the flexibility of its spaces and root6 provided the solution in the form of Amulet Hotkey KVM extenders, a technology it had successfully employed in a number of other installations. By using Amulet Hotkey KVM extenders, it was possible to move the media workstations into the CAR.

The DXZ zero clients provide a compact and silent alternative to large and noisy workstations in each suite.

The deployment of the DXZ zero clients throughout the production

facility – there are more than 80 locations in all – enable operational spaces throughout the facility to access multiple workstations or systems in the CAR, eliminating the need for additional hardware in the suite, saving space and greatly improving flexibility.

At the click of a mouse, users can switch between say, Media Composer and Pro Tools, transforming an edit room into a track laying suite.

“We looked at a number of KVM solutions,” said McNab. “However, when root6 introduced us to Amulet Hotkey we were very impressed with its responsiveness – there’s no noticeable lag at all. In fact we’re using the system in Quay Street where some remaining kit is connected to the CAR in Orange Tower over a private network.”

A smooth transition between two working sites is essential

ITV were handed the keys to the space with reseller and systems integrator root6 appointed to handle the installation. The transition between the two working environments needed to be smooth with minimal disruption.



The first phase of the job took place in root6's North London workshops where the individual bays were fitted and wired for power. The complex wiring for the Blackmagic 288 x 288 router and the majority of the internal CAR cabling was also pre-prepped off site.

The bays were then shipped to Orange Tower or held in temporary storage to fit the installation schedule. Once on site, root6 dealt with the run-outs from the CAR, dressing them into the relevant bays and installing the equipment as it arrived, "A lift and shift" operation as McNab describes it.

The staff moved into the new facility one production team at a time, and the first edit was completed just two months after gaining access to the building.

"It was a logistical challenge," McNab understates. "An all-new infrastructure including a workflow overhaul, was up and running in just two months with Christmas in between."

In addition to the CAR, root6 supplied the technical infrastructure to support 13 craft edit suites, six finishing suites, a grading room, between four to eight graphics workstations, three dubbing theatres and two voice-over booths, together with 12 media management workstations and a number of flexible operational areas around ITV's flagship production facility.

"It's been quite an experience," concludes McNab. "Importantly, we didn't skip a beat during the transition and we can now look forward to working in a much more collaborative and efficient environment."

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ITV_MediaCity_Move_CS_v1_0_December_2018

