



**I**t's a challenge faced by many radio managers at some point: building out a new facility, from the ground up or through a complete overhaul and upgrade of an existing plant. It can be a long and complex process, and it adds a hundred new things to handle — needs assessments, design and architecture, equipment selection and cost, plans and a timeline, and often a moving day — to the manager's already loaded schedule. A build-out also involves a lot of people, and that radio exec will be consulting and working

closely with corporate and station technical staff, outside acoustic and architectural designers, building staff, and vendors. It's an intimidating prospect.

*Radio Ink* talks this issue with some people who've been through it and have emerged — successfully — on the other side. Border Media Partners SVP/CTO Scott Wallace gives the inside info on a big facilities move and build-out undertaken by BMP/San Antonio, and we also have the details on projects at Bonneville/Phoenix, ESPN Deportes, and New Hampshire Public Radio, with expert advice on how to make a build-out come off with hardly a hitch.



## BMP/SAN ANTONIO'S NEW FACILITY "HAS REALLY SIMPLIFIED MANAGEMENT"

**CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE PROJECT?** Actually, this was an entire facility move. We had a leased space in San Antonio for five years or so. When we did the CBS acquisition, we ended up purchasing the building that was on the land of KTSA, which is the old Waterman Broadcasting, in San Antonio. We moved the entire facility, staff, studio, you name it, and then we built all new studios in this facility because the existing equipment was due for replacement. We went to a completely Axia-based system.

**WHAT EQUIPMENT DID YOU INSTALL?** We needed to make sure there was a way to initiate the digital revolution, and be able to provide content to all facets — streaming, over the air, mobile. This was something that came heavily into play as we made our equipment decisions. Also, another thing that was very important to us, we were going to get heavy into video, and change the way

we approach radio. So the equipment we chose needed to be capable of delivering multiple streams of content, regardless of where it was going. We also needed a product that could integrate with the systems we were purchasing or had in house, such as the playout systems for our automation. At the time it was Google, now it's WideOrbit, which is our automation system for playing out spots, music, commercials, all that stuff.

Because we had a large presence on our streaming side, we needed equipment that was capable of delivering a separate content stream to our online properties, that was easy to maintain and install, and where we didn't have to make a major investment in cabling compared to the old analog days. We chose Axia's work surfaces, and all their routing equipment. We used their LiveWire

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system, where basically everything is IP-based, packet-based. In the world of the Internet, everything has an IP address, and we're able to route that to anywhere in the facility over a single wire. One of the most important things for us was to limit the infrastructure build while providing the most flexibility and configurability.

**HAVE YOU HAD ANY FEEDBACK FROM THE PEOPLE WORKING WITH THE NEW EQUIPMENT AND FACILITY?** This is something we completed last year, and it was a major project when I came on board. What we found is that people really started to grasp this quickly. The usability of the products was simple for the operators to grasp. For all intents and purposes, we've gotten no negative feedback. Any problems we may have had in the past are easily corrected because now it's not a huge undertaking to go into the studio and take everything completely out and redo it. Now it's simply a computer change or a routing change done in the back room, because everything is out of the studio now. So it really has simplified our management of the facility as well.

**HAVE YOU MADE ANY PERSONNEL CHANGES, OR RETAINED THE PEOPLE YOU HAVE?** We retained people. In the old days, we had to put what we called Dymo tape labels on

the consoles and equipment. Nowadays, everything's got a display on it without having to put these ugly old labels on them. It simplifies the process. The great thing is we have the ability to customize the work surfaces for each on-air talent. We didn't bring any new personnel in. It was a simple process to retrain.

**WHAT WAS THE TIMELINE ON A PROJECT THIS BIG? WERE YOU ABLE TO MEET YOUR DEADLINES?** We had about a four-month period because the lease expired in March, and the one thing I found when I came aboard is that they really under-budgeted what needed to happen.

The biggest problem we encountered was the structure. The bones of the building were in good shape, but the infrastructure needed to be replaced. It took a considerable amount of time to do the necessary repairs to the building itself. Had we not had those, we probably would've done a little bit better budget-wise. But we did meet our deadline, and we were able to abandon the previous facility and have it cleaned and ready to go prior to the lease expiring. It took us about 4 1/2 months to do the entire project, and as I said, the majority of that was doing the building infrastructure — the HVAC, some electrical changes. Inside, we redid everything completely, from studios to desks, phones, carpeting. Everything was completely redone. So the biggest

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**CONGRATULATIONS TEAM SAN ANTONIO!!**

**Greg Martin**  
Director of Operations  
"Thank you for your vision of our build-out!"

**Mark Landis**  
VP of Programming  
JACK-FM #1 1250 AM PPM:  
(arbitron su09 & nov09-dec09-jan10)

**Alfonso Flores**  
Dir. of Ops/PD Spanish  
115% Audience growth  
(arbitron su09 & nov09-dec09-jan10)

**Albert Alegre**  
Norteño 720 Morning Host  
"Spanish Personality of the Year"  
Marconi Award 2009

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hindrance was that it was an older property that needed a little TLC. Had we gone into a brand-new building, it probably would've been a lot different.

**CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE EFFECT ON THE BOTTOM LINE?**

It's definitely made it a lot easier for us because we're not impacting the on-air staff in our routine maintenance or configuration changes. We don't have to go in and remove them or do it late at night, so it is saving us money because I'm not having to pay people for coming in overnight, or the wee hours of the morning, to fix things. It's also allowed us to do multiple things and provide separate content feeds to all the additional distribution mechanisms we have now. So that's definitely saved us from an operational standpoint.

It's always nice to get new equipment. It's like getting a new car. We've benefited both monetarily and from a personnel standpoint. I've also started to implement these technologies at some other facilities throughout our markets, so it was great for me to prove it out to the company, to say, "This is the direction we need to go in." And it's helped me garner additional dollars from my other markets because we've been able to prove it was a worthwhile investment.



**Scott Wallace**  
Senior Vice President/  
Chief Technology Officer  
BMP Radio

**WHAT GUIDANCE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHERS CONSIDERING SUCH A PROJECT?**

Don't do it (laughs). I've built studios back from the very early '80s until today, hands-on, and the evolution of technology has made it easier for us from a technical perspective. It's also made it better for the operators.

My advice would be, don't hesitate. It's something you absolutely need to take a look at because the technology can make your life easier. People will expect it to become more complicated, but I don't think it does. We've evolved the way engineering is covered in our industry from an RF standpoint to an IP standpoint because of the equipment that is being developed. The skill set that's required now for the technical staff is drastically different than it was 10, 20, 30 years ago. But that shouldn't scare anybody, and they shouldn't hesitate to deploy these technologies because it's truly making our business better. Quality is better, efficiency is better, and from a human standpoint, we need on-air talent who like to work on the space shuttle and not a Cessna (laughs). It's not very intriguing for a kid these days to take a look at some old technology when they grew up playing video games. If you want to mature that talent, you need to give them something that's challenging, and allows them to focus on what they're doing and do it well.

**THE WOW FACTOR**

**WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT?** ESPN Deportes launched in Dallas on 1480 KNIT in August 2007. Although most of the programming was from the network, ESPN Deportes/Dallas originated three local shows. The main studio was a small production booth that was used primarily as an audio dubbing station. We also shared a larger production studio to accommodate guests. There was a lot of studio switching during the first two years of programming. ESPN Deportes switched to 1540 KZMP in June 2009. The move increased our coverage to the Hispanic market in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area.

**WHAT WAS THE TIMELINE? DID YOU MEET YOUR DEADLINES?** The project was started in December 2008, and we moved to the new studios May 25, 2009. Yes, I met the deadline with a few hours to spare!

**WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF THIS PROJECT ON RATINGS, REVENUE, AND BOTTOM-LINE PERFORMANCE?** The move showed the commitment that



**Armando Gonzales**  
Chief Engineer  
ESPN Deportes/Dallas

ESPN has for ESPN Deportes. There is now a "wow" factor from guests and listeners when they visit the studios. The mood of the whole ESPN Deportes staff has been exuberant. Ratings and revenues have increased due to the excitement and increased morale of employees.

**BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH THIS PROJECT, DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR OTHERS WHO MIGHT BE CONSIDERING SUCH AN UNDERTAKING?** Planning

and preparation are key. Organization and attention to the smallest detail will help move the project smoothly and efficiently. Don't forget the small things that can slow a project down.

