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USER REPORT

Volicon Observer is Valuable Tool at Raycom

by Dave Folsom
Vice President and CTO
Raycom Media

MONTGOMERY, ALA.

With 46 television stations in 36 markets and 18 states, Raycom Media is one of the largest media companies in the country. Keeping tabs on the operational efficiency of a large station group is a tall order, but we've found a valuable ally—the Volicon Observer digital video logging, monitoring and recording system.

It was originally purchased to log all aired video for business and legal purposes, but the Observer has turned out to be far more versatile. In fact, we rely on the systems for everything from advertising verification, to competitive analysis, to regulatory compliance.

More than three years ago, we installed Observer systems in every news station to provide backup documentation to protect our first amendment rights. We needed a foolproof method to demonstrate exactly what original content had actually aired to protect the company from claims of factual inaccuracy.

PROVIDES BETTER WORKFLOW THAN TAPE

Previously, our stations were recording their broadcasts onto videotape, and finding necessary clips was extremely inefficient. Someone had to manually scan through the tapes and then dub off a copy once that content was located. Now, each Observer works behind the scenes to automatically record all content, including our broadcast news segments.

To find a specific clip in Observer, operators can access any desktop computer in the station group and perform a quick keyword search. Sharing the information with other parties is as easy as exporting the clip locally, and attaching a Windows Media file to an e-mail internally or we can just send a link to the original content.

Although the Observer was added as a legal and business documentation tool, we continue to discover unexpected uses for the system. Since each Observer provides a built-in archive of all aired programming, we now have a valuable tool for demonstrating compliance with closed captioning and other FCC regulations.

Likewise, we can demonstrate to advertising customers that commercials aired in their proper time slots. And, since each of our Observer units are equipped with a minimum of two channels, a station can record a competing station's broadcast alongside its own for competitive analysis.

This provides a tremendous resource for our news consultants, who continually need data to feed into future news offerings and help each station be as competitive as possible.

In addition to the local Observer systems, we have installed a central server in our Montgomery, Ala. operations center that enables Raycom management to log on, either locally or remotely, and view multiple



Volicon Observer

local newscasts at once.

This custom peer-to-peer application was developed by Volicon and provides a powerful and easy-to-use method for company managers to evaluate the quality of local newscasts, from both our own stations and their competitors, and to share content between our stations.

For example, our news vice president might spot an outstanding news series on one channel, and use the Observer system to provide a fast and easy means of sharing it with the other stations for possible use in their own markets.

The Observer's great versatility and simplicity (it works within our own WAN and e-mail system without requiring any additional equipment) and Volicon's willingness to customize its application for our specific needs have made this system an indispensable part of our operation.

Dave Folsom is the vice president and CTO for Raycom Media, one of the largest broadcasting groups in the United States. He may be contacted at dfolsom@raycommedia.com.

For additional information, contact Volicon at 781-221-7400 or visit www.volicon.com.