

HEADLINES

Summit Panel: Remote Industry faces \$500 million of HD upgrades in coming years

By

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The remote production industry faces the daunting challenge of converting nearly 100 standard definition production vehicles to HD in the coming years, a transition that will cost upwards of \$500 million according to Lou Borrelli, NEP CEO. Speaking during the SVG League Technology Summit Remote Production Update on Tuesday at the New York Hilton Borrelli and four other remote production heads discussed future challenges and current concerns.

Besides the physical plant, another major turnover needs to be underway, too. Where will the next generation of mobile production professionals come from? Besides these large-scale issues, panelists also chimed in on addressing the challenges of working through graphics issues.

With approximately half of the 160 trucks on the road facing replacement or upgrade in the months and years ahead, that represents a half-billion dollar's investment. To make this happen means a new understanding of the broadcaster/mobile production relationship. For Borrelli, this means more of a partnership than the traditional vendor/client relationship.

"This [investment capital] doesn't fall out of the sky....it's a challenge we must all face. It is not just about contractual obligations," Borrelli said.

Panelists checked in as to where they are at in the process of becoming 100% HD. Speaking as a member of the Alliance Productions organization, NCP's Mike Werteen said that it might be a bit premature to completely write off the value of SD trucks in the near-term. Another issue that came up was whether the upcoming trucks would necessarily duplicate the 53-foot double expando models that have dominated so far. It remains to be seen whether smaller trucks like those built by Mobile Television Group for the Big Ten network will fill out the fleet.

Returning to a longer-term concern, Borrelli pointed to the audience that he described as almost entirely white, male and aging. He promised to continue to bring this issue up in that the traditional apprenticeship programs would not be able to deliver the next generation of mobile production professionals. NMT's Mark Howarth shared his company's new initiative of working to create a new broadcast school that will be based in NMT's Torrance, Calif. facility.

Known as Centro (the Center for Education in TV and Radio) students interested in pursuing a career in television and radio broadcasting as talent, production or technical engineers can receive hands-on training from award-winning faculty and industry leaders.

CENTRO is a premier bilingual broadcasting institute aimed at training and empowering those interested in pursuing an exciting career in TV, Radio, and foreign journalists and technicians looking for high-end training, or for those currently in the industry that would like a refresher course utilizing the latest technology and high end digital equipment available today. Based on their interests, and career goals, program participants choose from two, high-powered 7- month TV core programs; the TV Talent and Production Program or the TV Technical Engineering Program. For those interested in radio, participants enroll in an intensive 4- month Radio Talent and Production Program.

Perhaps the hottest spot in the discussion surrounded what to do about graphics. Game Creek's Pat Sullivan summed up the core issue contrasting the Chyron Infinities that had an operational life of 10 years versus the 18-month lifecycle of the Duets. The durability and reliability of this gear, too, has been a challenge. Sullivan said that he was hopeful given a positive communication from Chyron promising to step up to the plate and resolve issues.

Perhaps the greatest surprise of the session was European perspective where graphics are no longer part of the mobile production business. Barry Johnstone, Euro Media Group COO seemed surprised about the issue in that graphics don't fall under the purview of mobile production vendors in Europe. Instead, third-party vendors provide the systems.