

Workflow

France's MBT managing the broadcasters

French broadcasters are managing their workflows with the help of a boutique MAM systems developer, MBT. **Neal Romanek** toured Parisian broadcast facilities to see how they did it

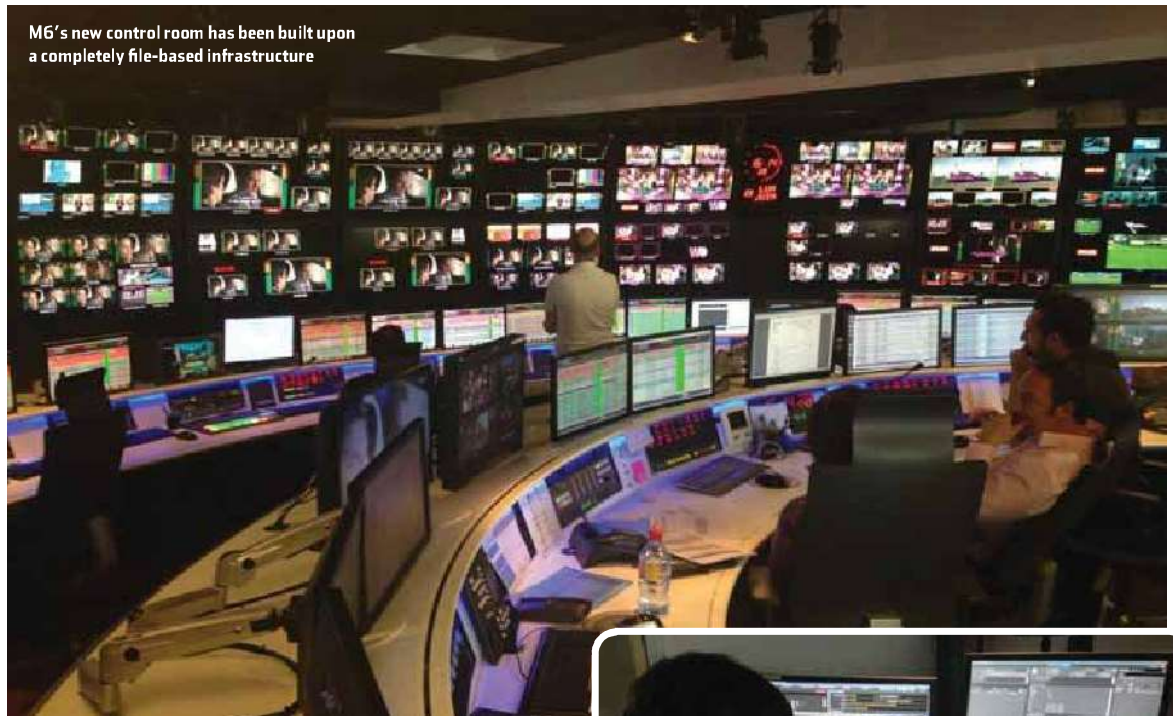
IN COMMON with many broadcasters, French TV channel TF1 has migrated from merely having a digital, multiplatform strategy to making that strategy the core of its operations. The channel's digital departments used to occupy a building adjacent to its main offices and studios — an extra wing next door. But as of May, TF1's digital department — totalling 800 people — moved into the main TF1 building and only seems destined to grow further.

Patrick Guillou is TF1's engineering broadcast manager and his responsibilities have expanded along with the need for a file-based broadcast infrastructure. "It's important to have system information and broadcast working together," says Guillou.

Until recently, TF1 has relied exclusively on its in-house team to create its file management solutions — including a media management system for news and traffic management. Its migration to file-based workflows has been careful and methodical, overseen by the company's CTO, Hervé Pavard.

"We would like to have zero per cent tape," says Guillou, echoing sentiments of broadcasters around the world, "but we're not there yet, especially with post production."

TF1 has links with other French channels, including M6 and Canal Plus. The companies often need to exchange files amongst themselves, but the promise of an interconnected,



M6's new control room has been built upon a completely file-based infrastructure

"A file produced at M6 will also work at W9, 6ter or any of the other M6 channels, which is cost-saving for us in terms of quality control and ingest control"

Mathias Bejanin, M6 Group

file-based utopia is still a few years away. "We would like to start in a practical way to have a simple file exchange between the broadcasters," says Guillou of the plans to streamline inter-organisation workflows.

MBT makes news

MBT (Media and Broadcast Technologies) has specialised in developing software for broadcasters since the company started in 2004. MBT's CEO, Bedro Bengouffa, is no stranger to the workflow needs of big broadcasters, having spent five years as assistant technical director of France's M6.

A company of no more than 30 employees, MBT has become a key partner in the digitisation of TF1's workflow.

The need to make news and sports reporting more engaging, in a world where viewers are inundated with graphics and animations, means that broadcasters are having to push graphics production to the fore of all they do.

News is a key component of TF1's offering. "In news, we need more and more graphics," says Guillou.

"Graphics is very important for news, and news is very important for TF1."



A member of the M6 broadcast team uses MBT's MAM system on its first operational day

MBT's NewsGraph was just the solution TF1 needed. The NewsGraph MAM system was developed specifically for TF1's needs and manages the broadcaster's entire graphics workflow.

NewsGraph is a new concept for TF1. It manages the workflow of pictures, graphics, animations and After Effects projects and integrates with Avid Newsroom. Its first function is as a MAM to manage these various assets. Secondly, it operates as a 'workflow processor' that tracks all stages of the process in producing a graphic or onscreen

visual element, from job assignment, to artist versioning and approvals, to archiving.

Before working with MBT, TF1 had no enterprise-wide solution for graphics management.

Currently, TF1 is working with SintecMedia to develop further software solutions for its rights management, which are scheduled to be up and running later this year.

A French revolution at M6

While TF1 has taken a phased approach to its adoption of file-based workflows, fellow French broadcaster M6

made the transition in one revolutionary move. In December 2008, M6 was the first channel to go completely tapeless, followed in succession by the remaining channels in the M6 Group over the next 18 months. The entire digital workflow system is managed by MBT's software, and runs on Harmonic servers with Orad graphics solutions.

In the beginning, M6 kept its MAM system, but everything else was rebuilt from scratch. Previously, the channel had been on a Sony LMS tape system.

"One of the goals of the project was to put everybody under the same technical system," says Mathias Bejanin, technical director of the M6 Group. "We wanted to mutualise the ingest and the storage in one universal system. A file produced at M6 will also work at W9, 6ter or any of the other M6 channels, which is cost-saving for us in terms of quality control, ingest control and other things."

"We would like to have zero per cent tape, but we're not there yet"

Patrick Guillou, TF1

M6's legacy MAM system was finally set aside and replaced with an MBT MAM solution which went online in June of this year. Among the other solutions provided by MBT is its Video Broadcast Manager, which transcodes 10,000 files a month for all the versioning required for the M6 Group's on-demand and multi-screen platforms.

MBT also developed a commercial synchronisation system for M6, which now regularly runs identical commercials across channels that have similar programming or audience demographic. The double screens are sold as a single package to advertisers. The MBT software allows for precise synchronisation so that a commercial break happens simultaneously across selected M6 channels with a single ad playing out in both slots.

Despite the ruthlessly complete nature of the transition, Bejanin insists the upgrade wasn't a problem.

For the broadcaster, it was change or die. Technical handicaps with their legacy systems were the fuel that propelled M6 to the next level. "It was necessary and everyone understood that point. It was

also necessary technically because our Sony LMS systems were falling apart. We had technical problems daily."

Often, it is when a broadcaster has no other choice that it makes the next

leap forward. When French broadcasters have had to make the leap, MBT has been there. MBT's ability to react quickly to the needs of big broadcasters, working individually with each of them to solve their particular

problems has turned it into the go-to company in France for large-scale MAM.

With file-based workflows increasingly on everyone's mind, tiny MBT will no doubt continue to grow.

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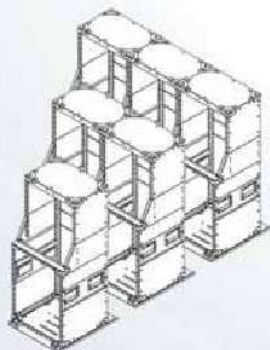
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