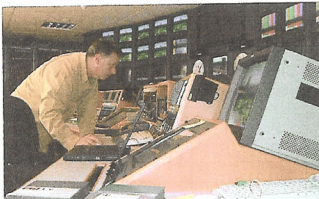


# System for new mediahouse

Exactly one year ago TWI, the largest independent producer, packager and distributor of sports programming in the world and part of the IMG Group, awarded a multi-million pound contract to systems integrator TSL to move its major facilities in London to establish a mediahouse. This, though, was not the start of this business relationship, an affiliation that illustrates the multifaceted role of a systems integrator in the broadcasting world today.

The origins of the plan to move the TWI London facilities into one building, co-locating production and post production from two existing but separate sites — creating a mediahouse — began six years ago. The end date to have the mediahouse up and running was set to be early 2003; however, the actual start date for the project was regularly delayed. This is quite understandable given the financial climate in the television industry over the past few years; an entirely commercial operator must time business investment decisions carefully.

As Richard Allingham, chief engineer with TWI and mediahouse, explains: "The timescale for the implementation of the project eventually came down to just over a year. At that point, the decision was made by TWI



Richard Allingham: "We had to be able to reproduce with mediahouse exactly what we had at TWP"

to take the integration work out-of-house."

The potential complexity of the project both in terms of size and implementation meant that understanding it at this stage to

process not only determined the scale of the work and what needed to be achieved, but it also allowed both parties to ascertain whether they could work together. This is a factor that he feels should not

**"How do you delete the original files when you've finished with them, and how do you know if everyone in post production has indeed finished with the original feed?" — Richard Allingham, TWI**

correct level of detail was not possible. TWI came to the conclusion that a brief consultancy should be undertaken first in order to ascertain just what was required. As Allingham adds: "The consultancy

be underestimated; not every supplier can work with every customer and vice versa, particularly on a long assignment.

TSL undertook to analyse the current workload taking the pro-

gramming throughput (sometimes 400 hours of new material per week to be transformed into hundreds of packages) and the potential storage requirements for a complete server solution as system design fundamentals. The incumbent facility had grown to be tremendously complex — it worked, but with too many manual processes, and it was suspected, much overlap between key tasks. TWI wanted to move what it had as a facility, retaining the operational objective but to develop a better workflow using modern technology at mediahouse.

TSL then talked to the actual operators and this often proved to be a key process. Adding cutting edge technology may well appeal from a purely engineering perspective, but the views of those that will actually operate these new systems should be taken into account so that

they feel comfortable with whatever changes are going to occur.

Mediahouse was aware of this, particularly as there was a strong desire to move from a large tape-based set-up to one using server technology at the core. A clear migration strategy, for all involved, had to be determined. Allingham says: "We had to be able to reproduce with mediahouse exactly what we had at TWI, so we couldn't reduce the tape facilities initially. This was mainly because we knew that if we lost the confidence of the key executive producers then they might potentially take future work away from mediahouse. We needed to assure them that if they wanted to carry on using tape then they would be able to do so."

The flip side of this was SNTV (Sports News Television, a 50/50 joint venture with Associated Press Television) a customer who had been keen to try and move to a server-based system for sometime. This potentially conflicting requirement also needed to be addressed.

## PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

TSL's project engineers developed a proposed master workflow for the new site, including video server storage, future archiving and the possibilities of better collaborative working in post production. TSL then began the process of looking at specific equipment and discussing those initial findings with mediahouse.