

Case study



MK Dons Stadium

MK Dons Football Club's AV over IP distribution is on par with the Premiership's finest

Born from the ashes of Wimbledon F.C. in 2004, Milton Keynes Dons F.C. (MK Dons) is simultaneously one of English football's oldest and newest teams. Having been uprooted from its origins in South London seven years ago and relocated to Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, the club has called Stadium:mk home since 2007. It's a state-of-the-art stadium, with a capacity of 22,000, and has been built to match the technical capabilities of the Premiership's biggest and highest earning clubs.

The stadium development also includes a hotel which is part of the Hilton Group. On a non-match day, the building is predominantly a Doubletree Hotel with a reception, bars, restaurants, conference rooms and 128 bedrooms – half of which face onto the pitch.

When building Stadium:mk, the management team wanted a facility that could cope with the ever-growing pressures of an increasingly competitive sporting and entertainment marketplace. The decision was to opt for an AV over IP content distribution system, rather than a traditional coaxial system as is currently present in the majority of similar sized sporting venues. A state-of-the-art system was designed to give fans, guests and staff access to live and pre-recorded match footage as well as sports and news channels – all delivered in a flexible way, to any part of the stadium and hotel.

The challenge

"We were determined to be forward thinking when it came to the stadium, media content and continuing to improve the customer experience," said IT Manager Steve Ward. "We saw the need for IT infrastructure to enable us to drive income to the club, as well as to support the team on the pitch. We look to the likes of Chelsea, Manchester United and Arsenal and realised that with a savvy approach to technology, there's no reason why we can't offer an experience on a par with those clubs – providing our fans with a truly world-class service."

MK Dons needed a solution that would enable access to all the sporting activity, news, views and developments whenever they want it, wherever they are in the stadium – whether that be pitch-side, in corporate hospitality areas or the hotel. A big challenge certainly, but one which all sporting and entertainment venues are looking to address.

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Steve Ward, IT Manager, MK Dons



The solution

After extensive research, Exterity IPTV solution was selected. It operates over the excess capacity of the venue's IP network (LAN) to distribute live and recorded match footage and other sporting coverage to HD TV screens mounted throughout the stadium, bars, restaurants, conference rooms and hotel.

The deployment of Exterity AvediaServers is fully integrated with the venue's Cisco network – which Ward describes as the "Rolls Royce" of networks. Over 150 AvediaPlayer Receivers are located throughout the venue to deliver high-quality HD TV and video content, which is managed using Exterity management Solution. The IT team is able to remotely switch displays on and off as well as controlling displays automatically using a software timer, ensuring that the system is as green as possible. The highly flexible scheduling capacity is vital for efficiently hosting non-matchday events around the building.

The result

The Cisco IP infrastructure throughout the venue was already being used for VoIP, data, WiFi and CCTV, so it made sense to use that existing infrastructure to also stream TV and video content. Exterity IPTV solution provides a wide range of broadcast and interactive capabilities, from simple user selection of channels with a remote, to electronic program guides, local information and hotel welcome screens.

Ward added; "We have the bandwidth that has enabled us to implement a host of new initiatives – from improving customer experience to generating new sources of advertising income. The learning curve for us has been about services vying for quality of service. For example on a match day the CCTV takes priority, voice needs a quick response – but internet connectivity is less important. The key is that we can efficiently manage each of these over the same network. Essentially stadiums are no different from any other large building, there are now so many services that can go over the network."

The seamless flexibility of the system was also a key factor for the MK Dons IT team. Each screen or display can now be controlled individually – or banks of screens in different areas or rooms – all from one central point or via mobile device. The need to have a team member walking the venue to switch channels and turn screens on and off has been completely removed now that all content can be accessed and controlled centrally. The system is also future-proof in that new screens can be added to the network without putting additional strain on bandwidth requirements. A tangible return on investment was also very important to us and significant savings are already being made on operational and management costs.

The system also means that MK Dons is now able to also incorporate AV into the event packages it sells. Event teams are now able to work with the IT team to educate customers and prospective customers on what the venue can offer. This flexibility is also key when it comes to other services – such as the bars and restaurants. For example, as the IT team controls where the Sky Sports channel can be viewed, access generally isn't available in the hotel rooms so guests are encouraged to use the bar and restaurant facilities where the premium channel is available. This in turn puts money back into the club, allowing it to keep admissions to see games as low as possible.



About Exterity

Since 2001 Exterity has been designing, developing and manufacturing technically innovative products that deliver networked video over IP to some of the leading organizations across the globe. These organizations choose Exterity products because they want the best, because they demand excellence.

Enabling distribution of HD quality TV and video over enterprise IP networks to an unlimited number of end points, Exterity solutions support large volumes of content and receiving devices without compromising system performance or availability.

Highlights

- Deployed in over 40 countries
- Scalable solutions for organizations of any size and across any sector
- Unique industry leading features and market specific application

Headquartered in Scotland UK, we extend our global reach through our offices in Atlanta, London, Paris, Munich, Dubai, Hong Kong and Johannesburg. Localized knowledge and expertise is enhanced through the Exterity StreamForce program of credible, technically innovative partners, plus an extensive network of in-country resellers and distributors.