



Case Study

Affordable HD migration with live and pre-prepared multi-language subtitles

SBS Broadcasting, part of ProSiebenSat. 1 Media AG, broadcasts three commercial channels in The Netherlands: Net 5, SBS 5 and Veronica. Recently the company made plans to launch new HD channels and migrate its existing SD channels to DVB. All of these services would require multi-language support.

The challenge

SBS were looking to launch new HD channels, migrate their existing SD channels to DVB. All of these services would require multi-language support. SBS also needed a system that could play out pre-prepared subtitle files, accept an existing live input, output SD formatted subtitles to the existing SD network, and supply subtitle data. The subtitles would need to be output in the correct aspect ratios for both Open and Closed formats.

The solution

SBS had two main alternatives. The first was to upgrade its existing subtitling system from Screen. The second was to replace the legacy system with an entirely new solution, while meeting all the requirements by the launch deadline. SBS decided to start from scratch and selected subtitling experts from Softel to get the job done.

Working with SBS's Manager in Broadcast & IT, Josbert van Rooijen, and its local reseller partner, Burst Video, Softel designed a solution for SBS based on Swift TX technology. Part of the well-established Swift subtitling/captioning family, Swift TX provides subtitle management and delivery for both SD and HD. Specifically designed to handle live and pre-prepared subtitles, it integrates seamlessly into live, near live and late workflows. It's not surprising that Swift TX systems have been deployed in over 500 high-profile installations around the world, including SVT in Scandinavia, Turner Broadcasting in the USA and Arqiva in the UK.

Following their signature service-led approach, Swift TX experts from Softel worked with the SBS project team to understand how the subtitling function needed to integrate with their other systems. Key objectives in the project were to design a solution that would smoothly integrate with SBS's SGT automation system, its live subtitle workstations, and a Solutions Radio re-speaking system for the visually impaired.

Challenge

- Manage live and pre-prepared subtitle content for new HD and SD DVB channels in multiple languages.

Solution

- Swift TX subtitle management and delivery platform from Softel with integration with SGT automation and live subtitle workstations.

Benefits

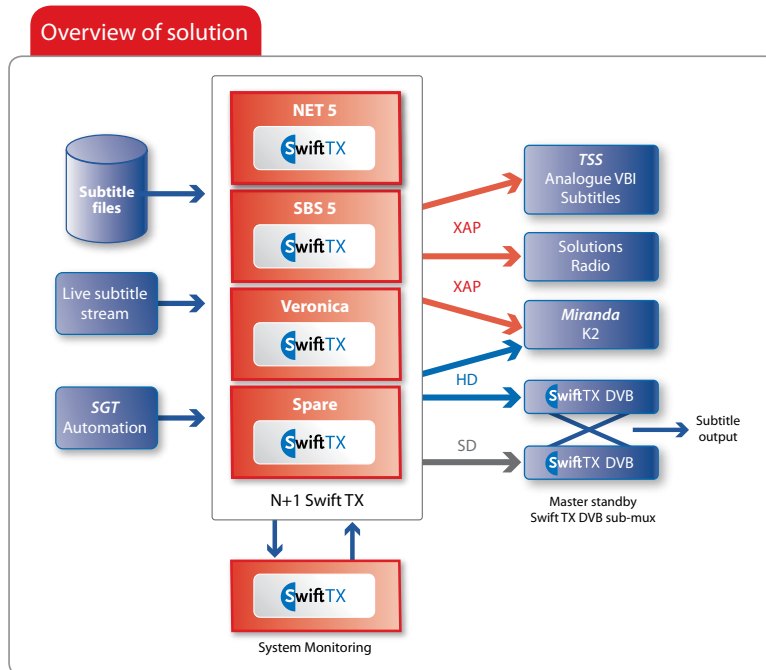
- Seamless integration of HD support and dramatically improved workflow, delivering enhanced productivity and reduced costs and complexity.



Softel Swift TX

Softel's product development team carried out bespoke development work to ensure the integration of the various systems, the correct routing of Open and Closed files, and full support for the destination aspect ratio. Partners SGT and Solutions Radio made use of Softel's industry-standard XAP protocol for control and subtitle data exchange.

One of the most useful aspects of Swift TX is its ability to intelligently check availability of files in advance of time-of-air, reducing the risk of incorrect or missing subtitles. The system also acts as a "gatekeeper," providing security for live input so that only the authorized subtitler is able to access the system.



The overall solution implemented at SBS Broadcasting consists of three Swift TX units, with a fourth warm standby. These units create both the SD and HD DVB bitmaps and provide subtitle data to the rest of the SBS subtitle transmission systems. A redundant Swift TX Sub-Mux system provides a main and standby multiplexed feed to the main transmission multiplexer. Additionally the system deploys a Swift TX monitoring unit, as well as being configured with RAID storage, to provide high availability.

The outcome

SBS went live with its new channels in January 2010. Moving to an HD-based Swift TX system for subtitle management and delivery has enabled SBS to realize efficiencies in both time and space at its facilities, provide an integrated operational workflow, and generate real business through increased competitiveness and additional services.

"The Softel technology provides us with the most streamlined and efficient workflow for both SD and HD, and for open and closed subtitles," says SBS Netherlands' Josbert. "It's an elegant and compact solution that allows us to stay ahead of the increasing demand for subtitling in a very cost-effective way."

Mike Owen, Softel head of products, added "Working together with Josbert to jointly deliver a solution for SBS has been a pleasure. We're very proud to see how the combination of our Swift TX technology and expertise has enabled SBS to provide access to its content across a broad audience via subtitling. That we've been able to do this while delivering efficiency at a very competitive price point is an added bonus."

About Softel

Backed up by three decades of broadcast experience, Softel is a global leader in key TV and video technologies including interactive TV, MPEG stream processing and multiplexing, captioning, opt cueing, teletext and subtitling; delivered through a full range of products, professional services and bespoke development.

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