



Live Sports Production — A View from the Field

Getting Started

For people in the business of producing sports, changes in television production, distribution and viewing—and advancements in the technology that make them possible—have created important new opportunities, as well as some serious challenges.

On the positive side, it's now possible to bypass traditional sports distributors and directly reach fans interested in events like college track and field, baseball and even niche events. On the other side of the ledger are familiar factors like increased competition, smaller audiences and lower revenues when compared to mass-appeal sports.

All of this gives sports producers more opportunity than ever in a business that has never been more complicated or demanding. Here to help navigate are four sports video professionals who have found business success in their respective organizations. Though each comes from a different niche within the community, they all have important stories to tell about their success with sports production.

In these interviews, four veterans of sports video production share their unique insight on today's challenges and opportunities, as well as valuable advice, so others can find similar success.

- Ted Ballard, Executive Director of Broadcasting, Miami HEAT
- Mark Fratto, Senior Associate Athletics Director, St. John's University
- John Servizzi, CEO of WebStream Sports
- John Mitchell, Director of Audio Video, TD Garden



Special thanks to Phil Kurz for conducting these interviews.

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Miami HEAT Becomes a Global Brand

Interview with:

Ted Ballard, Executive Director of Broadcasting
Miami HEAT

Ted Ballard, a 15-year veteran with the Miami HEAT organization, saw his video operation undergo a major redirection during the 2004-05 and 2005-06 seasons that meant big changes for him personally, and for the NBA team's video production arm.

Ballard, who was promoted to executive director of broadcasting, oversees all television and radio broadcasts. He produces and directs many of the team's broadcasts, and has put together a production team that for the last nine seasons has delivered HEAT broadcasts to fans on the team's regional cable partner, Sun Sports. In the 2010-2011 season, Ballard oversaw the team's efforts to expand the broadcast base by spearheading several unique programming initiatives on the team's website.



Ted Ballard, Executive Director of Broadcasting

Today, the HEAT's broadcasting production team includes five full-time, and a series of part-time employees. Annually, they produce four pre-season games, 70 regular-season game broadcasts, some first round playoff games, and a host of ancillary programs and series, such as HEAT Classics and HEATV on HEAT.com. In a typical season, some seven million TV viewers will watch the Miami HEAT games Ballard and his team produce, and over the past two years HEATV on HEAT.com has generated nearly 1.6 million page views.



Phil Kurz: Looking at your video operation at the Miami HEAT, what would you say were the top challenges you faced from a business point?

Ted Ballard: It's a funny thing - the biggest business challenge we faced ultimately led to a tremendous opportunity that I think took everyone here by surprise. That challenge was the problem of producing a network-quality pre- and post-game show on the Internet in an affordable way.

We went into the 2011 NBA playoffs with the idea of producing pre- and post-game shows for the Web, with the goal of providing a service to the fans, but we had absolutely no expectations. We didn't promote it; we kind of soft launched it. We basically took the approach that if people find it, great, but this is something we believe is the right thing to do.

I think we might have had 20,000 page views on our first playoff game, but by the conference finals we were getting more than 100,000 page views. We were like, "What? Wow!" This was with no promotion, and yet people just came in droves and found it.

Phil Kurz: How did the Miami HEAT get started down this path?

Ted Ballard: For so many years, our only experience had been with production trucks. That's what I did for 20 years of my life and what we had done for all of our experience here at the HEAT, where we've done the shoulder programming.

In both the 2005 and 2006 NBA playoffs, we produced broadcasts out of a production truck for the pre- and



Ted Ballard mans the TriCaster control surface

post-game shows that aired on our regional cable partner, Sun Sports. It's very expensive to roll in a whole mobile unit, hire a full crew, put up cameras and everything that goes along with setting up for a production like that. But that was the only way we knew how to do it.

The challenge for us more recently was to find a way to produce the same quality broadcast without making it cost upwards of \$30,000 to \$40,000 to put on one of those shows. That's where the NewTek solution came into play.

We found that by utilizing TriCaster to its ultimate potential, we were actually able to put on a show that really was very similar in quality to what we were able to do out of a TV truck.

Phil Kurz: So the genesis of the shows was in the mid part of the last decade?

Ted Ballard: With the signing of Shaquille O'Neal in the summer of 2004, and the subsequent development of Dwyane Wade, we realized this was going to be a special time in franchise history.

This was going to be the first time we legitimately had a shot at winning a championship. We knew we wanted to document the run of this team and their journey towards the championship in a special way.

At the time, I got together with the executive producer at Sun Sports, and we said "Hey, we've got to make this happen; we have to do these pre- and post-game shows and stay with it."

To this day, that was some of the best production and some of the best television we've ever done. That culminated in 2006, not only with those championship shows when the team was in Dallas and won the championship, but right through our championship celebration and parade. That really provided the model upon which we based everything else.

"That challenge was the problem of producing a network-quality pre- and post-game show on the Internet in an affordable way."

—Ted Ballard, Executive Director of HEAT Broadcasting

Then 2010 comes, and we are in a position again where we have a team that's unique and special, and in some respects unprecedented. We said to ourselves, "This is not the time to not be doing that kind of programming. This is not the time to jump off the train. This is the time to make sure we are giving fans all that they can handle and consume in terms of the programming surrounding this incredible journey and this incredible run.

The difference was that in the 2010-11 run, we were using a different vehicle. To be honest, when we approached our network partner, which had telecast these shows in the past, we learned their programming commitments had changed. They had more baseball, and they didn't feel like they could commit from a financial standpoint to airing our shows.

That was where we said, "We're not taking 'No' for an answer." We have one of the most popular – if not the most popular - websites in the NBA. Let's take advantage of that. We did something unprecedented.

We decided to create these shows and distribute them online - without really knowing how we were going to do it. But we knew we had to do it. We had to figure out a way to get the shows online.

So we all put on our thinking caps to figure out how we were going to get these shows online. We pulled it off and were doing fantastic shows. The success of those shows was an ancillary thing. We were just happy to be getting them on.

When we saw the appetite of the viewers, and realized there was such a strong interest in this type of programming, it kind of confirmed what we hoped would be the case, but also validated our efforts.

Then we got sponsors onboard, and our TV came back the next year, and said, “You guys obviously have been very successful. How do we get back in?”

Phil Kurz: Besides re-attracting Sun Sports to begin airing the shows, what has changed in your business since you began taking full advantage of the production technology to create television for broadcast and the Web?

Ted Ballard: I would point to the multifaceted level at which our product is consumed. Two years ago, we were barely putting anything on the Web. Now most of what we do we can create in a fashion that we can also put it on the HEAT website.

People have an amazing appetite for our product, and what is great is we once would spend hours creating a feature or a tease. Poof, in 30 seconds or a minute of the broadcast, it was gone - never to be seen again.

Now we create things that you will find on YouTube. There was that moment where the fan went out and shot the half-court shot and was tackled and hugged by LeBron (James). Ten million people have viewed that moment, and thankfully we were shooting and capturing it.

We played it back, and our sideline reporter Jason Jackson interviewed the guy. In the old days, you might have seen that on SportsCenter; you might have seen it on some type of weekly or year-end highlight show. Now, you can see it whenever you want, and 10 million people have done just that.

I think now the way you engage your audience is to recognize the fact that so much of what you do is consumed not just in that moment but in some ways in perpetuity.

That has been a huge change. It has changed the way we do things. It requires us to do a lot more, but it also allows us to do a lot more because we can do entire campaigns that are based on the Internet or social media, and still find another outlet for our product. That’s been both challenging and rewarding at the same time.

Phil Kurz: How has the broader reach of the Internet, when compared to the reach of your regional cable partner, impacted the Miami HEAT brand?

Key Takeaways & Tips

Web distribution of pre- and post-game shows feeds a seemingly insatiable appetite among fans who want information about their team at all times, on every device.

The worldwide reach of the Web extends the audience beyond local borders and helps to build the brand internationally.

Don’t become complacent. Look upon each game, highlight reel or story as an opportunity to connect with viewers.

“We’ve had fans in over 25 countries tune into our coverage online.”

—Ted Ballard, Executive Director of HEAT Broadcasting

Ted Ballard: I know the Miami HEAT is well aware of its worldwide popularity, but I don’t think we recognized the distribution of our shows on our website as a way to reach those fans until we did it and saw the response.

At the time we launched online, I don't think anyone thought what we could do would actually exceed the traditional model of providing our shows to our fans in South Florida who see them on Sun Sports.

We've had fans in over 25 countries tune into our coverage online. For instance, the Web opened our eyes up to all of the people in the Philippines who are interested in Eric Spoelstra, who has Filipino heritage. Then there are the people in China. You know some of these incredible markets, we didn't realize that this would be an amazing way to reach them. They watch our coverage, the post-game press conferences, the locker room sound. You know, we're giving them the most comprehensive, most in-depth coverage of their team, and we are reaching people beyond the borders of Florida and beyond the borders of the United States.

Phil Kurz: If you could offer your peers a list of the top three tips to achieve success commensurate with your operation at the Miami HEAT, what would be on it?

Ted Ballard: First, I think everything starts with preparation and planning. Over the years, we've discovered no matter what it is, whatever agenda you have, the more forethought you put into it, the better success you have.

Things occasionally come out good accidentally. But if you want to ensure success, you have to plan for it.

Second, always believe that anything is possible. I think too often people fail because they think something is too far beyond the realm of possibility or haven't seen anyone else do it. They may feel like it's just too hard to pull off so they don't attempt it.

I preach to believe anything is possible and then go try to accomplish it. Once you believe you can do something, you will find a way to get there. You surprise yourself more often than not.

Third, I think to believe in the people around you. As much as we all sometimes invest in our product personally and put forth a great effort, no one person can do any of this on his own, let alone all of this. So, you have to believe in the people who work around you. When you do, you help them invest in the product. You give them a sense of investment, and they are more likely to achieve the kind of success you hope they will. But until you give them those opportunities, they will only achieve what you let them.



Sportscasters on the set of HEATV

St. John's Builds National Exposure for College Programs

Interview with:
Mark Fratto, Senior Associate Athletics Director
St. John's University

Now in his eighth year at St. John's University, Mark Fratto has overseen an aggressive initiative to transition the athletic department's video operation to HD production; spearheading the implementation of a Web strategy to keep alumni and fans engaged with the institution's teams through highlight webcasts, features and coaches' shows and live streams of games on RedStormSports.com.

Under Fratto's direction, the university also produces Red Storm Report, an award-winning highlights show devoted to St. John University's men's and women's basketball teams, for regional sports network SportsNet New York and in the past year, 60 games for ESPN3.

Fratto counts among the operation's most important recent accomplishments, an agreement with ESPN that leverages multi-platform delivery of HD game coverage, development of a video production curriculum that lets undergrads and graduate students get real-world production experience, while providing staffing to produce game coverage, and the success of elevating the university's teams on the national stage - thanks to the high-quality work of St. John's video production team.



Mark Fratto, Senior Associate Athletics Director



Phil Kurz: From a business point of view, what are the top challenges you face?

Mark Fratto: The biggest business challenge we face is maximizing coverage of our teams in the highly competitive media market of New York City. While we realize it's the biggest media market, it's also the most crowded from our perspective. New York City has 10 professional sports teams and 100 colleges. At St. John's University, we compete for headlines and news time with each of them.

The ability to promote our brand by telling our stories is essential to our overall business success. Not only does more coverage mean greater exposure for our athletics program to prospective season ticket holders, sponsors, donors, alumni, fans and student-athletes, it also helps to build awareness of St. John's among high school students considering their university options.

The ability to generate our own video content and distribute it has been an invaluable tool for us as communications professionals and university administrators. Our ability to improve the quality of our productions has given us an opportunity to reach a national audience through ESPN, the worldwide leader in sports. That is something very few colleges and universities are able to do, consistently.

Phil Kurz: So improving the quality of your sports productions is directly tied to achieving your goal.

Mark Fratto: Right. We always challenged ourselves to elevate the sophistication of our video product, but that took on a different meaning when we were trying to engage ESPN, in a contract where there is a monetary value assigned to each game. They have a standard for the quality of production that must be met every time out.

So, we've always tried to set the bar higher and higher as our operation evolved. Now it is a real business and a revenue-generating asset for our athletics program that never generated revenue in this way before.

That's a challenge when it comes to hardware and hardware selection, as well as when it comes to setting up our human resources. It's a challenge when it comes to taking what used to be a smaller, one-camera streaming operation that we wanted to try out for the benefit of our fans and turn that into a highly evolved on-campus production company. We've seen challenges at every step, and we have risen to meet them.

Phil Kurz: That can't be cheap to do. How have you managed the cost side of the equation?

Mark Fratto: One of the really interesting things for a school our size is we don't have the production budget that you may associate with a large, football-playing BCS college or university. So, we've incorporated students very heavily into our broadcast, and we actually evolved academic curriculum in the form of production courses where undergraduates and graduate students contribute heavily to production of each game.

"Homework" takes on a whole new meaning when students are operating our graphics engine and accidentally select the wrong graphic or hit the wrong button, and it ends up becoming something that millions of people see. It's been a challenge, but extremely rewarding that our operation is contributing so heavily to a legitimate academic pursuit on campus.

Phil Kurz: So the ESPN contract you mentioned must give St. John's national exposure unlike anything the university's teams have ever had.

Mark Fratto: We have been producing legitimate 720p or 1080i HD live games that have appeared via different network partners, for example, we did three games last year that appeared on the CBS Sports Network. We did one live game for SportsNet New York, as well. Both are over-the-air broadcast networks. But our agreement with ESPN3 has worked well for us because of the number of games (60), where our rights have been tied in 2012-13 in the current Big East Conference, and the widespread distribution we are able to get via the Watch ESPN app on PCs, tablets and smartphones.

Because we're producing and transmitting a real HD television signal, we have also had ESPNU cutting into our broadcasts during games of significance. When we have in-game and postgame highlights, they translate easily to ESPN SportsCenter and other ESPN programming. We've had as many Top Ten Plays this year as teams that are ranked in the Top Ten in the nation, like Indiana, Duke or Kentucky when they were ranked earlier in the year.

Phil Kurz: So leveraging more affordable HD production technology is creating real business benefits.

Mark Fratto: What we've been able to do by capitalizing on this technology is to turn the business model upside down, where we are now able to make broadcasting coverage for Olympics sports and women's sports more profitable than it's ever been.

Additionally, the exposure we are able to garner certainly has a value that can be converted into dollars. If you



look at it similarly to paid advertising for our university and our athletics program - in terms of the time St. John's University is covered - if you were to buy that kind of time on a major national network or even a local or regional network, you'd find that the costs would be astronomical.

There's also our ability to sell sponsorships into the broadcast, which varies from network partner, to network partner. Our ability to take advantage of the opportunity to build in sponsored elements into the production itself is something we never had before.

Phil Kurz: What advice would you offer someone else in your shoes to achieve the kind of success St. John's University is enjoying with its sports video production?

Mark Fratto: One, you need to select hardware that you can get a lot of value out of because even at a Texas or Florida State, budget is something everyone has to look at and be responsible for.

“The ability to generate our own video content and distribute it has been an invaluable tool.”

—Mark Fratto, Sr. Associate Athletics Director, St. John's University

Staying on the topic of hardware, I think it has to be something that is easily teachable to individuals who don't have a lot of experience because we are trying to keep a sense of financial and fiscal responsibility. You are going to have to incorporate students or recent graduates, people who haven't been television veterans for many, many years because that's a way you can keep your costs down. So, you need hardware that is cost-effective where you get a lot of value for the price, and that is easy to use and easy to teach.

Two, the next challenge beyond hardware is setting up your infrastructure, and you have to figure out broadcast locations. What we are trying to do next is build a mobile unit in the most efficient way possible. For now, everything is “a little too mobile,” and we pull our hardware from venue to venue and set up every single time, which we are trying to cut down. Another aspect of infrastructure is that now that digital transmission is becoming a way to reduce cost compared to satellite or fiber, you have to work closely with your IT Department to ensure you're going to have consistency in your ability to transmit over IP.

Three, you have to have a plan for your human resources, and again it has to be financially responsible. At the core of our operation is our commitment to providing a legitimate educational outlet and giving St. John's University students a leg up on others who want to go into production, media, communications or broadcast. So, it's been a very interesting, and very rewarding way to meet the challenge of who is going to crew your games, and also get more benefit for the entire university, versus just the athletics program.

Phil Kurz: Was there an “ah ha” moment, that allowed you to achieve success?

Mark Fratto: It really was a combination of discovering that there was affordable, high-quality HD production technology available and IP transmission and how reliable and cost-effective that's become.



We were at the Sports Video Group's College Video Sports Summit, and sat in back-to-back panels two years ago. One was on the next generation of digital broadcast equipment and HD production switchers, and the one after that was on IP transmission and how that can be used to send sporting events to a local television network. I was blown away.

Phil Kurz: What is the one thing you see your peers missing who haven't yet found the success that's being achieved at St. John's?

Mark Fratto: What we have tried to do very much is view this as a step-by-step process, and we've had to really focus on that process. You can't expect this to happen overnight.

For us, our ESPN agreement was the result of more than eight years of building our production process, and a year's worth of meetings, phone calls and e-mails with the worldwide leader. In concert with that, were all of the things we needed to do on campus to guarantee that we have a reliable infrastructure and to make sure we were applying the legal aspects for broadcast rights agreements. We really had to review everything over and over again.

We had to work closely with our Business Affairs division to forecast the budgets when it came to capital items and operating costs. All of those things have to be approached step by step, and gradually you begin checking things off your list. As you accomplish some of the smaller goals, momentum for the entire operation builds.

Key Takeaways & Tips

High-quality, professional video production is critical when faced with local competition from multiple professional and college teams in the area.

Professional, high-quality productions also create important new revenue generating opportunities.

Powerful, easy-to-use production technology is necessary to develop an environment for student production staff to be successful.

WebStream Sports Engages Audience and Grows Business

Interview with:

John Servizzi, Chief Executive Officer, WebStream

John Servizzi is quick to find the humor in most situations, but he is deadly serious about his company, WebStream Sports, and the shows it produces. Focused on both broadcast and non-broadcast production for athletic conferences, university athletic departments and other sports-related institutions, WebStream Sports has a proven track record of producing everything from live NCAA Division II games all the way up to Division I national championships.

The Indianapolis-based mobile sports production company is guided by the proposition that it is possible to produce sports for Web and broadcast distribution for a small fraction of the price traditionally associated with big-time sports production, without sacrificing the big-time look. That principle has garnered WebStream Sports an impressive list of clients and - even more importantly - an audience for those clients that Servizzi says is growing by 25 to 50 percent annually.

By leveraging production technology that offers outstanding value for the money, building a team of producers who strive to be great storytellers and riding the tsunami of Internet distribution to multiple screens, Servizzi has built WebStream Sports into a sports production powerhouse that is responsible for nearly 1,000 shows per year.



John Servizzi, Chief Executive Officer



Phil Kurz: What are the top challenges you face from a business perspective?

John Servizzi: I think they are probably the same for everybody. You know as far as Internet delivery has come, it still doesn't compete with broadcast delivery, and if you have a chance to work for a national network or national entity, the numbers and the sales become substantially

easier. Delivering things solely to the Internet is still not a revenue generator for most organizations. It's still an expense without a large amount of revenue attached. In terms of growing, that is a difficulty.

The other challenge for us is the guys at the top of the industry and at the network level have virtually unlimited resources and at the same time, our audience is expecting us to deliver a product that is on par with that. For us, it is actually more difficult, I think, than the network-level shows because we have to find a way to deliver.

You want to deliver something that a viewer expects to see. We don't want to be apologetic for what we do; we want what we do to stand right there with anything else anyone is doing and budgets be damned. That's kind of our approach and will continue to be.

Phil Kurz: What are the top pieces of advice you could give someone who is facing similar sorts of challenges?

John Servizzi: I think you should know the strike zone. That's one principle we talk about a lot. It is really good to go and try to slay a big dragon or try to get that huge revenue project, but the reality is that everybody has to start somewhere.

You have to know what you are capable of and what your limits are at this point in time. You can swing for that fence, but it is kind of a Cecil Fielder or a Babe Ruth kind of thing. The reality is their strike outs were just as impressive as their homeruns. But in business, you can't have impressive strike outs. That's an approach that we use that I can share.

From a technology standpoint, there is always something better than what you are currently using. That's the nature of this industry. There's always something better that you can get your hands on, and the reality is, nobody at home knows what you are using. The further reality is nobody at home cares. They care about you making a great show.

I don't care if you are shooting with a VHS camcorder, a Hi8 or whatever you have laying around. There are rules to great production that will prevail over anything technical. It just doesn't matter. Good content is good content is good content.

Phil Kurz: What was the "ah-ha" moment you had, or the thing that you discovered that allowed you to begin achieving the success you are having in sports production?

John Servizzi: I don't think there was a particular "ah-ha" moment. I think what we realized very quickly is that you are as good in this industry as your last show. The reality for us is when we started out doing single-camera coaches' feeds, it didn't take very long before the person said, "That was great, but can we get a clock on that? Can we get replays? Can we get announcers? Can we get better graphics?" The cliff there in front of us became very steep, very quickly.

"The reality is, nobody at home knows what you are using (to make your sports show). The further reality is nobody at home cares. They care about you making a great show."

—John Servizzi, Chief Executive Officer, WebStream Sports

So, I think that is the moment you realize that you have arrived and streaming is legitimate, that moment when your audience looks at your show and says, "We don't care how much you are spending. We don't care what you are using to produce. All we care about is delivering a show that looks like it is supposed to." I think that is what drives us. I want our football games to look as close to an NFL broadcast as they possibly can.



Certainly, there are technological limitations. There are budgetary limitations. But I don't want my producers to think about those. I want them to think about striving for greatness in everything they are doing and think about what they expect to see as a viewer. And go make that.

Phil Kurz: What is the one thing you see your peers doing or not doing that prevents them from moving forward and being successful?

John Servizzi: I think graphics are consistently an area that needs improvement. You don't appreciate fully what a

network show looks like versus a local production.

You can apply that from local TV and regional sports networks, to national networks - and you can see the steps up. Really, once you have four cameras on the basketball game, you have four cameras on a basketball game. The camera setups are essentially the same. The difference in those levels is graphics. It's the way the show is delivered; it's the way the show is packaged that really makes all of the difference in the world.

I would say to people from the standpoint of advice about what I see people do consistently wrong is they just don't get the look right. They just don't get the graphics right.

And that is not necessarily that everything has to be animated and everything has to be this, that or the other. But it's where do the graphics fit? How do they contribute to the story? I would say that most people who don't do this well, don't understand that there will be more to producing a game than simply covering a game. They neglect their role as a storyteller.

I think my staff and my producers really do embrace their responsibility to be the storytellers.

Phil Kurz: What has changed in your business since you began?

John Servizzi: I'm not working out of my bedroom anymore. We have a 10,000-square-foot office and about 15 full-time folks. So, that has changed a little bit. I can't come to work in my pajamas anymore, which is really unfortunate.

I think the truth is anytime you have success, you have some struggles and pain that goes with that. I don't mean for a second to imply that this has been easy or fun all the way through. But I think my staff's approach to covering an event is really the differentiating factor.

You know, you take a team of people who are all committed to one another and committed to our clients and the games and athletes we cover, and things change. This isn't a job for anyone who works here. It's not just a job. There is a vocational element to it; there's a passion to it. They all genuinely love and respect each other.

There is a climate here unlike anything I ever have seen.

Key Takeaways & Tips

Despite lower-revenue, viewer expectations remain high, so there's no room to cut corners.

Strive for greatness with every production, regardless of technological or financial limitations.

To create audience-engaging content, be a great storyteller.

TD Garden Pumps Up Home Game Experience for Boston Fans

Interview with:

John Mitchell, Director of Audio Video
TD Garden

Fans visiting TD Garden, home to the NHL's Boston Bruins and NBA's Boston Celtics, are quite familiar with the work of John Mitchell, even if they don't know him personally. That's because every year some 1.5 million Bruins and Celtic fans passing through the gates of TD Garden can take a second or even third look at pivotal game action on a multi-million dollar scoreboard that's equipped with giant, high-definition LED displays.

Mitchell has served as control room director for the Celtics, Bruins and all other events at TD Garden for the past 18 years. He manages a staff of 35, including production personnel, live event staff and broadcast engineers. He also provides video support to NHL replay officials and NHL Statistical staff, as well as helping coordinate camera and audio feeds for radio and TV broadcasters covering games at the arena.

Mitchell and his video production team also provide Internet streaming services for events from TD Garden, including live concerts from local radio stations, boxing matches, preseason games and special events.



John Mitchell, Director of Audio Video



Phil Kurz: From a business point of view, what are the top challenges you face?

John Mitchell: The top challenge we face at the Garden is how to maximize the capital dollars we spend to enhance the fan experience to the point where our customers can't wait to come back for another game. HD broadcasts of sporting events are so good now you really need to give the fans a reason to get off the couch and come to the game. Effective game presentation helps keep your fans engaged in the game and provides creative ways to entertain the crowd during the pregame, intermission and timeouts and earn sponsorship revenue at the same time.

Now, the fans not only see all of the game action live, but also replay of key moments from multiple angles. We also include incredible show opens with special effects, network-quality music videos of player and team highlights, along with stunning graphics and 3D animation. Even better, we provide live shots of fans on the scoreboard dancing to great music, showing emotion, cheering their team and becoming part of the game. All of these elements are used to create an overall experience that makes the price of their ticket a great value and leaves them wanting to come back.

One of the ways we've addressed this challenge this year is by acquiring two NewTek 3Play replay systems, which have really enhanced our game presentation on the Garden HDX LED scoreboard. Thanks to our new 3Play replay systems, new NHL in-net cameras, overhead goal cameras, backboard cameras and other great angles, which we have never been able to replay before, are now available to the producer and director. This provides fans with multiple replays from various angles giving them an incredible view of every great play.

Phil Kurz: Can you give me an example of that combination of technology in use that enhanced the fan experience?

John Mitchell: In a recent Bruins game there was a close play in overtime that was not called a goal. By the time the referee had reached the penalty box to review the play, we had already showed the new in-net camera angle replay with the puck clearly passing the goal line. The fans could immediately see that it was a goal. They

erupted knowing that the Bruins had just won the game. If it was last year, and we didn't have the 3Plays, they wouldn't have been able to see the game-winning goal from that new angle. Last year, we could choose from three camera angles, this year we have 11 angles.

Phil Kurz: So your video production for the Garden HDX LED screen is helping to create a unique experience for fans at the Garden.

John Mitchell: Without question, this is enhancing the fan experience.

We're bringing in all of these camera angles from the TV trucks on hand to cover a game. We don't have to pay for the equipment or the labor. We can get all of these video feeds, like the overhead that the NHL puts in, and the in-net cameras. Together, those are four more great looks we can show.

“It is now possible to outfit a control room with top-quality HD production technology at a very affordable price.”

—John Mitchell, Director of Audio Video, TD Garden

The broadcasters have two low cameras and the robotic cameras on the glass behind the goalies at hockey games, or on top of the backboard at basketball games. We are trying to record as many of those as we can for replays during the game and then archive these HD MOV files, right after the game. Our editors now have many different angles to choose from when cutting music video or game opens. On many plays, one angle is better early in the play and another angle is better later in the play. So having all these camera angles of every play really enhances videos we create and our overall presentation. After the game, the .mov files of each play are pushed over a network to our SAN where eight Final Cut Pro machines can simultaneously access the video for their productions. Our editors spend very little time searching for footage. All plays are copied into a directory for each player. The investment in our new 3Plays has definitely enhanced our workflow and helped us maximize the benefit we get from our overall labor and control room investment.

Phil Kurz: Imagine you are talking to a peer of yours at some other stadium or arena, what would be your top tips for them to find success similar to yours?

John Mitchell: First, I think I would tell them that it is now possible to outfit a control room with top-quality HD production technology at a very affordable price. The cost of the latest HD control room technology is one-fifth to one-eighth of the cost of what it was 3-5 years ago. This kind of affordability is even allowing colleges and high schools to deploy the same exact workflow that we are using at the major league level, at a fraction of the cost. Seven years ago, it cost over \$220,000 for a replay machine that records four replay angles (which comes out to over \$50,000/replay angle). Today, it is now \$40,000 for eight replay angles (\$5,000/replay angle).

That is a huge price drop. This equipment will be useful for the next decade. If you amortize that over 10 years, the cost is miniscule compared to the value of the assets we will be capturing and producing.

Previously, HD control rooms were multi-million dollar



investments. That's tough for many organizations to handle, now the price is down to \$25,000 to \$150,000 and much easier to get approved. Financing that amount over 3-5 years, with interest rates at historic lows, can lower the cost of entry. Selling sponsorships to local businesses can further reduce this cost, and hopefully help you turn a profit on your investment.

Second, remember the big cost is labor, not equipment. With the increasing cost of health care, taxes, 401Ks and other employee expenses, it's really labor where the costs are greatest, not equipment. Anything you can do to speed up your workflow will help you save money in the long run. It makes sense to spend more on one-time equipment costs, if it means you will drastically improve your workflow and reduce your on-going labor costs. Less employees utilizing better equipment can accomplish more work in the same amount of time.

Third, leverage the power of IP. NewTek is at the forefront this technology with their iVGA Pro and the way they are sending HD video over the network to the TriCaster with third party products from Chyron, Graphics Outfitters and other companies. Graphics Outfitters recently released ScoreHD, which overlays score/time/clock data from Daktronics and other scoring systems, similar to ESPN score bug. Now you can send score/clock data to the TriCaster without a separate

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HD-SDI feed of the key and fill. It's all done over IP using the NET inputs on the TriCaster. If they are doing this right now, I can't imagine what they will be doing in three to five years.

Fourth, find new revenue opportunities — sponsorships for replays, special features, player videos, etc. Web shows of concert and special events can also generate sponsorship revenues. For instance, KISS 108 and JAMN 94.5 produce a live backstage Web show during the concerts produced at the Garden. The show is a combination of interviews of the talent by the radio station DJ's, backstage performances to VIP's and contest winners, and a few songs from the live show. The radio station earns revenue selling sponsorships for the live concert show and the streaming show they broadcast to the Web.

TriCaster replaces many different pieces of equipment in a traditional control room. In addition to being cost-effective, you don't need an engineer to wire all the machines and make it all work. You don't have to worry about sync and genlock for the cameras. Not needing an engineer on staff further reduces the cost of entry for high schools, colleges, universities, local access and broadcast television stations.



Phil Kurz: What is the one thing you see your peers missing that keeps them from achieving their highest level of success?

John Mitchell: I'll broaden this out to high schools, colleges and local access television stations. Most managers are not in their positions long enough, unfortunately. There is a high turnover in these positions. Rather than working for a long-term goal, you work for a goal that's a year or two out.

If I could give one piece of advice to people pitching their managers, you should come up with a plan and finance it over three to five years. By spreading the cost over that period

you can reduce the monthly or yearly expense, and hopefully generate a positive cash flow from selling sponsorships to local businesses.

When you show a replay, you can have an animated wipe with the logo of the sponsor just like they do on major networks. You also can sell commercials and sponsorship features during the pre-game, time outs, intermissions and game action.

Key Takeaways & Tips

Leverage video to enhance the experience of fans attending games, so that they feel they've received a superior value for the cost of the ticket and they want to return again soon.

Capture as many camera angles of critical game moments and players, as possible. They will prove equally valuable on game night and later when highlight reels and new videos are created.

Utilizing a live production workflow that's designed to get shots clipped, categorized and stored on game night makes it much faster and easier for the video editors, print designers and others who depend on content the next day.



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