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ITV Insight

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Supporting the 2-year College Interactive Video Community

News for the New Year

Now that we're well into 2005 and right in the middle of the school year, it is time for another edition of this newsletter. I know everyone is particularly busy in February, so I'll keep the content presented here brief and to the point.

Choosing New Equipment

As more sites plan for a future that will include a mixture of ISDN and IP calls, I've received a lot of inquiries lately from those of you tasked with making purchasing decisions regarding endpoint equipment. What follows is a list of considerations that might be useful to you during the process of deciding on a specific vendor or system:

- Does the vendor have experience supporting educational video conferencing networks and endpoints?
- Do you need help integrating ITV and A/V equipment and, if so, does the vendor have experience in this realm?
- Have you spoken with other K-20 users to obtain their opinions about the vendor?

- Do you need a large, medium or small room system? (The next few questions are closely related to this one.)
- Do you need support for multiple monitors and high-resolution graphics?
- How many microphones will you need, and do you need to consider supplemental miking and mixing options?
- Will you need support for multiple cameras with pan-tilt-zoom control?
- If you have legacy equipment you want to continue to use, will the new system(s) be compatible with those existing components? (Examples are additional cameras, microphones, mixers, projectors, and document cameras.)
- Will the vendor allow you to demo the equipment before you buy so you can evaluate how well it meets your specific needs?

Another issue many of you have had to consider is the question of what brand of equipment to choose. The reasons I recommend choosing Polycom are as follows:

- 1) In our sector alone there are about twice as many Polycom endpoints as all other makes combined. We have about 80 Polycom systems in the CTC group at last count, and there will probably be a few more by the time you read this. Buying a Polycom system means you will be part of a larger installed base of users who can share information and compare notes on technical issues.
- 2) The capabilities of Polycom systems are most compatible with the new MGC MCUs.

ITV Informational Meetings

Thanks to all the people who attended the ITV Informational Meetings that took place in December. I found the meetings to be good opportunities to share details about KORRS, the ISDN to IP transition, and other issues important to our group. I was pleased to have Frank Leeds join the meeting to talk about K-20 network technical issues, and Tom Carroll from the Program Office provided additional perspectives on important issues. The feedback I've received indicates that many of you would like to have regular updates on these topics, and my goal is to use both this newsletter and future informational meetings to fulfill those requests.

The 221 to 732 Prefix Change

As I mentioned in a recent email to all of you, the University of Washington has asked K-20 for approval to replace the 221 calling prefix with the 732 prefix. Thanks to those of you who provided feedback about the change and helped me develop my initial list of transition considerations. Based upon feedback from the K-20 Network Technical Steering Committee, we are moving ahead with planning the transition, and it looks like the time frame is going to be from April of this year through October. During the transition period, both prefixes will be in operation, allowing time to resolve specific institutional or endpoint challenges that need to be worked through.

Each of the sector technical representatives is working on a set of transition guidelines, and I will send out the guidelines for our sector in the near future. In the meantime, please call or email me if you have questions or concerns about the prefix change.

January Tech Tip

I sometimes encounter the need to create presentations or graphical documentation and there

are two small applications that have helped me complete these tasks effectively. These tools may also be useful to you and/or your end-users who share PowerPoint presentations, step-by-step tutorials, or application demos with groups. The first is called Gadwin PrintScreen. I have version 2.6 from the www.gadwin.com website. This free utility operates much like the popular Snag-It program, but is simpler and I like it better for the basic task of capturing all or part of the image on the computer screen. The other application is available from PC Magazine and is called WinPointer. Version 2 was a free download when I acquired it, and I've learned that version 3 may now be purchased for a small fee. At any rate, the tool is useful for adding text and graphics to images on the computer screen and can also be used to supplement the built-in annotation tools in presentation applications like PowerPoint.

New Video over IP Documents Available

Once again, I want to mention the following four documents that are available to assist you with your ISDN to IP transition plans:

- 1) IP ITV Primer
- 2) IP Setup Guide
- 3) ViDeNet Steps
- 4) Assist Offnet

I'd also like to receive feedback on how I can improve the documents in the future. Please contact Michael Evans for details and additional information.

Quality of Service for K-20

Finally, I'd like to add that the Quality of Service (QoS) documentation mentioned during the informational meeting on 12/10/2004 is still being developed, and I am hopeful that we will all be receiving it within a month or so. Although this information is taking longer than expected to complete, I wanted to let you know it has not been forgotten. Thanks for both your interest and your patience!