

Wireless IFB

Introduction

The use of wireless IFB has exploded in recent years. No one wants cables that tether them anymore! This proliferation has resulted in additional frequency coordination issues at a time at which we are seeing more and more RF spectrum taken away in favor of consumer applications. The good old days of the professional market leading the way forward are behind us and we are forced to follow what is being dictated by much larger markets. This is especially troubling in ENG which is growing rapidly. A new methodology is needed to allow continued expansion of the convenience and versatility of wireless IFB systems. IntraCom Systems, LLC, with the assistance of Gary Bressler of KVBC in Las Vegas, have come up with a solution to this problem by using the wireless capability of the VCOM System.

Implementation

An IFB system is comprised of three major components: 1) the mechanism that creates the interrupt; 2) the receiving (listen) device; and 3) the signal transport medium between the other two. VCOM offers a solution to components two and three, the talent listen device and the transport medium. In addition it allows something new, i.e. multiple talent talkback destinations and multiple user talk around capability. This implementation uses standard off the shelf network and computer hardware and can be accessed from most anywhere.

The key to this is the VCOM Mobile Platform and a unit distributed by Sprint that allows a WiFi access point to operate anywhere that the Sprint High Speed Data infrastructure covers. Mr. Bressler has taken this unit and combined it with the station's existing IFB infrastructure and given his new department a new tool.

The IFB composite signal is fed into the VCOM System which conveys it to the talent's handheld WiFi device via the Sprint unit. Since the VCOM signal is actually a bi-directional path there is a talkback channel along for the ride. In addition, by using the controls on the handheld, the talent may select multiple talkback destination as well access a common party line or more than one party line for interactive multi-talent events. Ideal for large area breaking news and elections and political conventions! These talk-around channels may be accessed from anywhere as well locally and at the studio.

Configuring such a system is simple. An IntraCom VCOM server is installed at the studio and connected via standard USB and Firewire audio interface units to the station's existing IFB and intercom system. It is compatible with any system as it only requires baseband audio to be connected. Talent tally indications can be added as well if desired through the use of the VCOM software with standard off the shelf logic interface hardware. The server is connected to the data network and is allowed to access the internet or a private virtual network. This data is accessed in the ENG van by the Sprint mobile unit and becomes available to the handheld units used as talent stations. It may also be fed into existing IFB systems that are wired or wireless if desired if the expanded talkback capability is not needed.

Talent operation is completely intuitive; the touch screen on the handheld shows several talk buttons and, in the case of party line talkaround channel(s) being including, listen and talk buttons. The receive is always on so the talent is hearing what is being sent and the talkback is controlled by the buttons. In the case of using existing talent user station components, no change in operation by talent operators is necessary.