



The

Broadcasters' Desktop Resource

www.theBDR.net

... edited by Barry Mishkind – the Eclectic Engineer

From the Transmitter Site

When Tech Support is Part of the Team

[June 2010] One of the key decisions an engineer needs to make when he specifies equipment relates to Tech Support. Will the manufacturer stand behind their products under any and all circumstances? Here is a situation none of us want to see, but the outcome is exactly what we should expect to see.

It is almost a sort of bad joke these days: in some facilities – especially after dark - you will find long rows of studios, but not a single live individual. Indeed, entire clusters often depend upon computer automation or remote control alarms to keep them on the air.

But sometimes, it takes more than remote control to recover from a problem. Indeed, it is often during those “quiet” times, when no one is around that Murphy rears his ugly head. That is when it is critical for the local engineer to know the manufacturer’s tech support is part of his team, ready to respond quickly to help when needed.

THE HOLIDAY FIRE

Everything was quiet in the early hours of Dec 26th, 2008, at the CKHJ facility in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, when a faulty electrical issue caused a spectacular fire. Firemen were called out from miles around.



This is an ex-Transmitter Building.

When it was over, the transmitter building and all the equipment belonging to the Astral Media Radio Atlantic station, including a Nautel Ampfet 10 transmitter were completely destroyed, and the station was now completely off the air with no backup transmitter available.

Holiday weekend or not, something had to be done.

ROUSING THE TROUPS

Holiday weekends are usually difficult times when it comes to contacting people, some of whom are even away on family vacations. But Dick Cleveland, Technical Services Director of Astral Media Radio Atlantic had no choice but to take a deep breath and call for help.

Cleveland called the Nautel 24/7 Customer Service telephone number and was immediately put in contact with Kevin Rodgers, Nautel Director of Customer Service.

After getting more details about the situation from Cleveland, Rodgers quickly decided the best course of action to get CKHJ back on the air as soon as possible was a loaner transmitter, one of several that Nautel keeps on hand to help out in situations like these. To speed things up, a Nautel J1000 - 1 kW transmitter would be tuned, tested and delivered from Nautel's manufacturing plant located in Bangor, ME (Bangor is closer to Fredericton than the main plant in Hackett's Cove).

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Immediately, Nautel Customer Service Technician, Steve Braley volunteered to abandon his holiday leftovers and rushed to the Nautel plant in Bangor to tune the J1000 to CKHJ's 1260 kHz frequency and arrange for it to be delivered to CKHJ the very next day, Dec 27th. A veteran of 21 years in tech support, Braley knew the anxiety felt by stations when they suffered major issues taking them off the air.



Steve Braley readying a J1000 for shipment

While Rodgers processed all the paperwork to ensure the transmitter would clear Customs, Braley quickly got a loaner transmitter onto the bench - and as he done many times - tuned, tested, packed, and delivered it to the Maine/New Brunswick Border Crossing, where it was picked up by Cleveland.

A HAPPY CUSTOMER

With that, the transmitter made it through to CKHJ without any problems and the station was back on the air by Dec 28th, "an impossible task I would have thought!" exclaimed Cleveland, who promptly

ordered a new Nautel XR12 to replace the beyond-repair Ampfet 10, as well as a new J1000 to serve as a backup transmitter for his stations.

This sort of quick, responsive customer support has earned Nautel top marks from broadcasters around the world.

“Nautel has been our first choice for transmitters for over 20 years” said Dick Cleveland, whose company now has a total of 12 Nautel transmitters in the Maritime provinces. “I’ve been telling people for years and this just adds another chapter in the success story of the company and again asks the question ‘why would you buy anything else?’ Thanks very much for the ‘above and beyond the call.’”



Situations like this emphasize the importance of developing a team-like approach and relationship between the local engineering folks and the manufacturer’s tech support. Having that extra hand and help when needed certainly works to replace anxiety during problems and rapidly get everything back to normal operation.

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Customer Service Technician, Steve Braley has been with Nautel for 21 years. Starting out as a lead technician in the test room for 10 years, Braley found the occasional on-call and customer site visit so rewarding that he pursued a customer service role permanently. The father of a nine and a ten year old, he enjoys shooting pool and following the Red Sox almost as much as helping Nautel users.

Nautel’s 24/7 support options (help by phone, email, webchat, etc) are found on their support page: <http://www.nautel.com/CustomerSupport.aspx>

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