



The

Broadcasters' Desktop Resource

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... edited by Barry Mishkind – the Eclectic Engineer

Broadcast Operations

New Changes in Satellite Distribution



By Karen Johnson

[September 2013] It was 1981 when satellite delivered analog audio began replacing telephone lines and bicycled tape recordings.

Over the years, technical improvements have delivered better audio and program control, obsoleting a lot of gear along the way. Once again this year, new platforms and receivers are being rolled out. Here is how it may affect you.

In technology, change is a constant. Even the most state of the art technology will eventually become obsolete.

Such a change is happening now in the satellite broadcast world with the ABR and DAC series of receivers and encoders. Last spring equipment manufacturer International Datacasting (IDC) announced that the ABR product line was being taken off the market by September 30, 2013 – being replaced with a more efficient content delivery system.

Now, with limited product on the shelf, the end-of-sale date for both the DAC and the ABR could be in a matter of days, rather than weeks.

CHOICES

Many radio networks and their affiliate groups soon will be deciding between the STAR delivery format and the X-Digital delivery platform to keep their network's robust and reliable for years to come.

IDC which has owned and produced the ABR line for the last three years has developed the STAR system as a replacement platform. At the station level, the replacement for the current ABR will be the new STAR Pro Audio system.



IDC's STAR Pro Audio Satellite Receiver

Those affiliates of networks that have chosen the X-Digital system will need to order the XDS-PRO series of receivers.



The XDS-PRO 4 receiver

Some radio networks have already made the switch, updating their satellite delivery system to the new platform and notifying affiliates of the upcoming cutover dates.

Others have chosen to delay the inevitable need to revamp their system for several months by purchasing spare DAC's and ABR's to have "on the shelf," while they are available.

However, while purchasing spare ABR and DAC units is a viable option for broadcasters who need to commit this expenditure into the next budgetary cycle, finding them may become more of a challenge.

That is because the ABR/DAC satellite broadcasting product lines are nearly depleted, and support is expected to end by 2016.

Unfortunately, some the networks have yet to act. And by choosing not to prepare, before long the choice will be made for them.

MAKING THE MOVE

In an effort to make the conversion path easier, equipment manufacturers are offering incentives to entice broadcasters to convert their networks in 2013. For example, IDC is offering a "Trade Up" program for all current ABR customers through the end of 2013.

Specifically, IDC is offering a discount of \$500 per ABR unit returned and replaced with one of the new STAR Pro Audio units.

Extensively used in Europe, the STAR looks like it will be a more efficient content delivery

system for U.S. radio networks, with more features and higher quality audio encoding.

California-based equipment manufacturer Pico Digital is also offering a package for networks making the platform conversion. If you qualify as a new radio network customer and purchase the X-Digital Xpress Radio System, you could receive \$6,000 cash back.

This rebate program, offered through December 31, 2013, not only includes the ABR system, but Comstream, Starguide, Wegener, and others. Also, with the purchase of 25 or more XDS-PROQ receivers, Pico Digital offers an additional rebate per receiver.

TIME TO PLAN AHEAD

With limited product available, the time to act is now. As they weigh the options, radio networks should strive to decide quickly – between now and the end of September for example – to give affiliates sufficient time to react before the change-over date.

As an affiliate of a network, you should take a moment to review with your program provider what their plans may be. If no plan is in place, affiliates should seriously consider the purchase of spare equipment for their station. As time goes on, parts and support will become more and more limited.

For more information regarding end of sale for the ABR platform, and specifics on new equipment options, contact Mark Johnson or George Gimourginas at Ka You Systems: 703-378-9090 or at www.kayousystems.com.



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