The production and facilities companies responsible for the TV series produced for major Spanish broadcasters such as TVE, Atenna 3, TV3 and TVV, recently selected EVS to deliver a more efficient and cost-effective workflow solution that would improve the productivity and quality of their programmes. The Spanish production companies include Diagonal TV, Conta Conta, el Terrat and facilities companies MediaMovil, Ibercin and Video Report.

They knew they needed a more efficient alternative to traditional tape-based methods, but faced a familiar dilemma. With ongoing commitments to supply TV series and drama to Spain’s biggest broadcasters any new technology would have to fit into their established pattern of production. After all, a disruptive changeover - whether in terms of down-time or re-training - would jeopardise the very thing they were trying to improve.

“Since introducing the EVS production workflow in 2006, everyone involved in the production process has noticed a dramatic improvement in workflow efficiency and productivity.”

Eugení Margallo
From Diagonal TV (Production Company)
What was needed was a system that would:

- be cost-effective to implement within the existing infrastructure, with the minimum of disruption;
- retain the benefits of ISO (isolated) recording, where dedicated feeds from typically three cameras could be synchronised and selected during post production;
- offer instant access to material and the opportunity to add and share notes that would be useful during the post production process;
- organise rushes and associated information in a logical file structure that was easy to navigate;
- allow all material to be locked together coherently, or the nightmare of information scattered across several places would simply re-emerge in electronic form;
- enable footage to be available for browsing before the final broadcast footage was in the can, ruling out any system that generated browse copies in a separate operation after the shoot;
- give several production staff the opportunity to browse content simultaneously;

"We save time and money because we have direct access to content during production for scripting or lighting purposes, we can check that a sequence has been synchronized even before it has finished, no longer need to search through recorded tapes during post production and have more logging flexibility. Everyone involved in production can now view, check and browse sequences previously logged by the assistant director."

Eduard Ramo,
From MediaMovil (Facility Company)

All three companies chose carefully integrated systems from EVS, including the EVS XT[2] server controlled by a workstation running the EVS IP Director software, alongside the EVS XStore[2] central shared storage solution. Developed seven years ago, SATA is an improvement over the conventional AT Attachment hard drive (sometimes called IDE meaning independent drive electronics) that dates all the way back to 1986, and has emerged as a cost-effective storage protocol to rival Fibre channel.

**Uninterrupted recording**

One of the key benefits of the XT[2] is its loop recording feature, which owes much to the slow motion heritage of EVS. By constantly recording the audio and video feeds from each camera in a continuous loop, this ensures that scenes are never missed. Operators can view and work instantly on the footage being recorded without having to wait for the sequence to be finalized.

**Multi-camera recording**

Another important feature is the capability to accurately control multi-camera recording from a single point with the IP Director application, even when multiple EVS XT[2] servers are being used, so eliminating cumbersome manipulation of multiple tapes. Similarly, the servers have the flexibility to handle a variety of recording formats, including the Sony IMX MPEG family running at bit rates of 30Mbps, 40Mbps and 50 Mbps, cutting out time-wasting conversion stages.
Derushing during production

Instead of operators recording all the rushes to central storage, so ‘passing the buck’ for post production staff to sort out later, the XT[2] presents the right takes and angles in a well-organised, time-stamped collection.

The way in which material is passed around the system also adds security to the acquisition process. Rather than entrusting valuable footage to vulnerable original VT recordings at the mercy of the librarian’s powers of retrieval, the system holds content across a number of storage devices, with the XStore[2] in particular providing a safe buffer store between production and Post production.

Instant synchronised access

Time is saved by the system’s capability to provide direct access to the desired content, not only during production but also in post production. For instance if anybody wants to check that a sequence has been well recorded, all the relevant camera angles can always be played back in synchronisation mode even if it is still recording.

By recording the pictures from each camera on ISO (isolated) feeds, the editor is able to freely choose between cameras, allowing a mistake made on one camera to be avoided during post production.

Doing this with tape used to mean that 40 episodes shot on three cameras capturing seven or more scenes per day could generate up to 250 separate cassettes. All had to be carefully filed with various logs from the sound engineer, floor manager, lighting designer and so on before post production could begin. And if any continuity queries were raised during production, a tedious search would have to be made through the tapes while technicians and talent stood idle.

With the EVS system, all the camera footage from any scene is available for instant synchronised playback, without the need to manually synchronise time codes, along with the assistant director’s logs and other relevant notes.

MediaMovil, Ibercin and Video Report all volunteer that the proven field experience of the EVS applications for more than ten years gave them a great deal of confidence in switching to an organised electronic system, without disrupting established production methods or compromising on reliability.

In fact the end-to-end solution, which uses the same language over an intuitive graphics user interface (GUI), is estimated on average to have reduced the time spent in production and post production by some 30 per cent.

IP Director: The IP Director is an integrated suite of video production management software with versatile control through the XT Series Server. Running on a Windows based workstation, IP Director allows the user to easily ingest, log, manage, search, track, edit, create clips and highlights, browse and ultimately playout any video or audio content instantly.

XStore[2]: XStore[2] is a dedicated media storage system for sharing and editing audio and video content in both HD and SD. It allows users to store content once and re-purpose it many times, allowing for a fully optimised file-based workflow. It also provides almost limitless additional storage to the EVS XT series servers. XStore[2] is ideal as either a central media archive or for near-line storage.
"With less production time and less expense we have increased our efficiency, productivity and the quality of our shows."

Eduard Ramo,
From MediaMovil (Facility Company)

Benefits >

- Uninterrupted recording ensures that scenes are never missed.
- Accurate multi-camera recording.
- Operators can instantly access material as it is being ingested.
- All the relevant camera angles can always be played back in synchronisation mode.
- Minimal disruption to established production methods.
- Monitoring and approval of sequences happens instantaneously.
- The system can be extended very cost-effectively.
- More accessible and reliable than tape.
- Assistant director logs available for all to check or browse at any time.
- No need to train producers with additional cost and lost time.
- Reduction in production and post production time by some 30 per cent.