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“Keeping ITV on the Air”

Trilogy Communications Ltd, the broadcast communications specialist, has just supplied a replacement for ITV's crucial 'Red Phone' system that connects the network transmission centre with its five regional playout centres.

As part of an outsourcing program for ITV, Technicolor Network Services began managing the staff and operations of ITV's northern and southern playout centres in Leeds and London. These centres manage the playout of the ITV network channels and also the delivery of content to other platforms.

ITV's decision to move its Network Director to the Technicolour Network Services Southern Transmission Centre in Chiswick Park created the requirement for a new Red Phone system. The original system had been installed over 30 years ago and was based on bespoke and now obsolete BT equipment that was becoming more fragile with age. ITV had looked at replacing the system on a number of previous occasions but the opportunity had never arisen. With the move to Chiswick Park the opportunity was clear to see. Having previously installed a number of large Commander digital matrix intercom systems in their South Bank facility, Trilogy was the obvious answer.

The requirement for a new system had a number of absolute requirements most notable of which was that the system had to operate over IP on two networks; MPLS *Net04* network and leased ADSL. Having given careful consideration to the requirement, Trilogy came up with an innovative solution that met all of the requirements whilst getting rid of the large infrastructure overhead of the old system. With some creative thinking and clever reengineering Trilogy's solution even managed to retain the actual 'Red Phones' themselves.

Also, key to the design was the requirement that the network director would be able to call all five of the regional ITV companies in London, Leeds, Channel TV in Jersey, Ulster TV in Belfast and Scottish TV in Glasgow instantly via a 'Red Phone'. Having called the playout centres he would be able to inform them of issues such as schedule changes made for example as a result of rapidly evolving news situations such as the 9/11 terror attacks.

To actually make contact all he need do is lift the receiver and press the call button, as he does, the phones at each of the other five locations immediately start to ring.

As a solution Trilogy's system minimised hardware requiring each location to have only a 'red phone', a small interface box and a Mercury Interface Unit. This allows each of these phones to be connected together over an IP network giving a truly flexible solution.

The beauty of this solution lies in its complete flexibility should the network director decide that someone else need to be added to this group then he can configure the system accordingly regardless of the communication device they are using.

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Note to editors:

Photo attached – MIU front.jpg



Photo caption – A Mercury Interface Unit (MIU), the device used to tie all of the sites together over an IP network