

Radio World

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MPR Likes Element Modules, Pathfinder

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ST. PAUL, Minn. It's been a few months now since Minnesota Public Radio began broadcasting from our new studios. The centerpiece of the facility is the audio mixing and routing system by **Axia Audio**. Twenty rooms, ranging from small edit/production rooms to large broadcast control rooms, are equipped with Element control surfaces.

Element, Axia's new modular control surface, has been well received by our staff. The user interface is intuitive and uncluttered. Deeper features, including EQ and dynamics control, are accessed via menus. Some of these features also are accessible via dedicated controls on the new Production Module. We have two on order and expect to install them later this summer.

Taking calls

The Show Profile feature eases console configuration, helping smooth transitions from one show to the next. It integrates with the Telos 2101 phone system so phone lines are automatically configured along with the console for each show.

Element is available in a range of frame sizes and configurations. Our edit rooms use small 12-space frames, while the larger control rooms use 28-space frames. A couple of our control rooms dedicated to music broadcasts use pairs of eight-space frames arranged in a split console configuration. The space between the frames is left for paper copy.

There are several modules available for



Ethan Torrey (seated) and Axia's Kirk Harnack

Element and we're using most of them. The basic input module is the 4-Phone Fader module, which adds Set and Hold buttons to each channel for use with phone hybrids. It also integrates nicely with the Call Controller module, which combines two faders and associated controls with a phone line selection panel similar to Telos' Desktop Director.

We do several talk shows, which often feature multiple guests by phone along with listener call-in. The Call Controller module allows one fader to be configured to work with the Next button, selecting the next screened caller.

A phone-in guest can be assigned to the other fader on the caller control. Additional guests are assigned automatically to faders on the 4-Phone Fader modules described above. This allows phone hybrids to be assigned to any fader on the control surface while maintaining full Call Controller module functionality.

There also are programmable button panels available for the creation of custom control functions. We use these to

support a preset-and-take system for moving air chains from room to room.

For example, towards the end of a broadcast on our News and Information Service network, the board operator can preset the air chain to move into the neighboring control room. In the meantime, the neighboring studio is being prepared for the upcoming broadcast. At the top of

hour, the operator in the second control room "takes" control of the air chain with a button press.

The back-end of the preset-and-take system is built using scripts that work with PathfinderPC, the routing control application that provides audio routing control independent of control surfaces. Preset-and-take is just one example of Pathfinder's usefulness. We also use Pathfinder to monitor and control the issuance of network ID break commands, and Pathfinder clients running on PCs already in our legacy rooms provide audio routing control there as well.

The Pathfinder Panel Designer is a tool for quickly creating custom soft-button panels to run on a PC. These "soft" panels can be tied to the hardware button panels to mirror their function. We used Panel Designer to create four button panels for use in two rooms, a project that would have taken much longer to do in hardware.

For more information, including pricing, contact Axia Audio in Cleveland at (216) 241-7225 or visit www.axiaaudio.com.