



Yikes, we've gotta move!

How does a radio broadcaster respond to a three-month deadline to move?

by Gary Hooper

That dilemma confronted Fairchild Radio's CHKT-AM and FM88.9 in Toronto. In late July of last year Fairchild got word that it was necessary to find a new home to succeed the studios that had been in suburban Richmond Hill for 14 years, and to do so by Oct. 31.

The multicultural stations that have served the Greater Toronto Area in a number of languages, primarily Cantonese and Mandarin, since 1997 had two control rooms, two production rooms, two edit suites and voice studios housed within a 6,000-square foot area. Needed was the development of a plan that would move everything quickly and efficiently while imposing minimum impact on day-to-day operations.



Fairchild assistant general manager Jennifer Lo



Fairchild operations manager David Choi



The logistics had to be flawless.

After the new 8,500-square foot location was found—and with just two months remaining to put together a budget, order equipment, design and build studios—it became obvious that having a conventional “stick built” studio design finalized and tendered would not leave a realistic amount of time for construction to be completed.

While pondering the building of control rooms, announce booths and production studios, I recalled an experience from 1985 with Telemedia in Montreal involving booths manufactured by Mecart. After a week of consultation and exploring possibilities, measurements were taken and made, and a purchase order was issued. An October 1 delivery date was promised.

Fairchild operations manager David Choi and assistant general manager Jennifer Lo decided that it was time to move the studios into the digital realm and chose Wheatstone as the system to control the BE AudioVault 10 and the other studio sources. LX24 consoles and sideboards were chosen and optioned for the control and production rooms.

During September, we worked with Fairchild’s technical staff to install the rack room and CAT6 LAN infrastructure, all 16,000 feet of it. The areas were pre-wired in preparation for the prefab Mecart studio units, which were delivered on schedule and on budget. Their installation technician had the studios assembled in less than three weeks, just one week before the two stations had to be operating from the new location.

As the Mecart people were doing their thing, the rest of us began the Wheatstone and peripheral equipment installation in console furniture supplied by RVA/Homeworthy.

Five days ahead of schedule, on October 26, the old studios were shut down and the new control rooms went online.

And there was not one moment’s downtime.

Gary Hooper is the president of Thornhill-based HP Services. He can be reached at 905-889-3601 or by e-mail at hps2@rogers.com.

