REAL-TIME COMPUTER ACCESS FOR ESPORTS BROADCAST OBSERVERS
IHSE KVM SOLUTION ENABLES CENTRALIZATION OF BROADCAST EQUIPMENT

THE CUSTOMER

The ESL FACEIT Group (EFG), headquartered in Cologne, Germany, is the world's leading esports and gaming entertainment company. The globally active group operates and organizes a variety of gaming events, professional tournaments, esports leagues and broadcasting channels. With the Electronic Sports League (ESL), the company also hosts Europe's largest league for gamers.

In Stockholm, Sweden, EFG operates a broadcast facility under the DreamHack brand for regular gaming festivals and competitions. ESL manages these events, many of which are hosted at the facility's own TV studio.

THE CHALLENGE

The broadcast complex includes six independent production studios, where live footage from TV cameras in the event hall, as well as in-game camera feeds of players and analysts, is processed. The production staff must select the desired video material from the numerous video sources in real-time, including replays and slow-motion shots of crucial game scenes. The edited video streams are eventually broadcast live on Twitch and, depending on the event, also on YouTube, FACEIT Watch, and other platforms worldwide.

In the original setup, the video servers and broadcast computers were located across the six production studios, directly at the observers' workstations. EFG aimed to centralize the source devices in a dedicated server room to enhance administration, maintenance, and data security. Despite the physical distance of a few hundred meters, it was crucial to ensure that the video was displayed without delay or loss of image quality.

THE SOLUTION

EFG worked closely with system integrator Mediability to design a solution that would meet all requirements. After extensive market research, EFG and Mediability selected an IHSE KVM extension solution, which transmits computer signals between the server room and the production studios via existing fiber optic cabling.

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Each of the 26 studio workstations is equipped with an extender console, a small box mounted under the desk, that connects to the keyboard, mouse and HDMI screens (including six dual HDMI screens for the replay workstations). The console communicates via fiber optics with its counterpart, the extender CPU unit, which is connected to the dedicated computer in the server room. The IHSE system transmits the KVM signals bidirectionally in real time using a proprietary data protocol. An IP-based signal extension was not an option for EFG due to latency.


THE BENEFIT

"The physical distance of the devices is imperceptible to the production staff. The observers did not have to change their workflows in any way – it just works as if the computers were located directly at the workstations – but with the added benefit that the relocating the servers enhances the studios by freeing up space and eliminating the noise and heat generated by the powerful equipment."

Martin Bergström, Head of Broadcast Tech Sweden

Centralizing the computers in air-conditioned, access-controlled server rooms also increases their lifespan and protects them from environmental factors like dirt or moisture.

Following the satisfying experience with the IHSE KVM solution, EFG plans to expand the KVM system by adding a matrix switch. This will further optimize workflows by connecting all servers to all observers, allowing instant switching and access to any source from any workstation. The matrix system will also enable pre-configured studio setups at the push of a button, eliminating the need to create new setups for each production.

FUNCTIONAL DIAGRAM
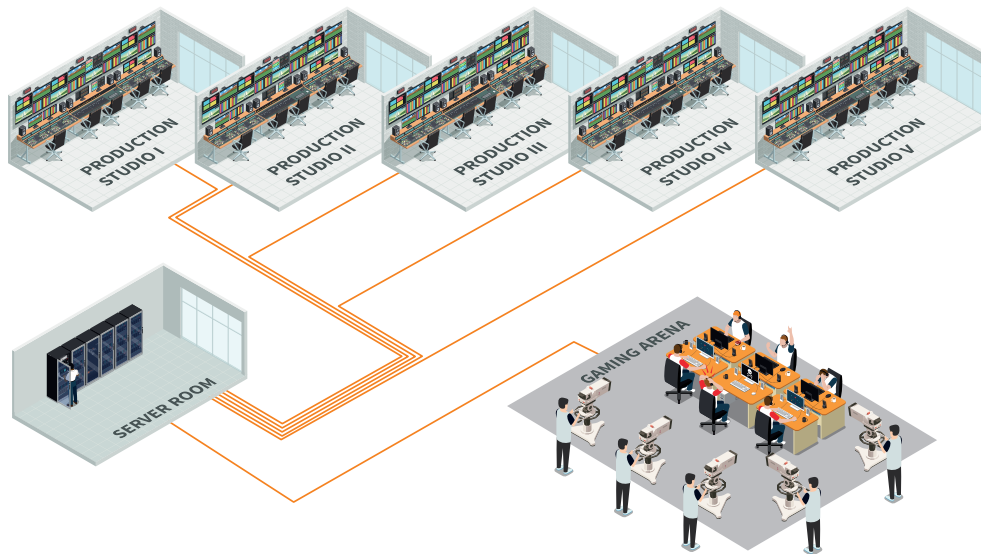
KVM PRODUCTS IN USE

- Draco vario KVM extenders

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