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Burk Simplifies Remote Control

ARC Plus, Adapter and AutoPilot banish complicated scripts

USERREPORT

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DENVER — For many of us in the broadcast world, a remote control system is a way of life.

It keeps us from constantly having to be at a place where we have to monitor our stations manually. It helps us with switching at sunrise and sunset. It may even help us with monitoring our tower lights. Without it, we become lost.

I was asked recently to try out Burk Technology's ARC Plus with their Plus-X IP-8 Adapter. Our setup here in Denver has been the ARC-16. This unit requires a ribbon cable to go from the interface panel to the ARC-16 unit. The thought of upgrading our system seemed out of reach due to the complexity of our setup.



INTERFACING

After discussing what I needed with Burk Technology over a year ago, they decided to create an adapter for their new ARC Plus system.

When looking to upgrade our remote system, the biggest requirement for me was that it be compatible with our interface panel. Our setup is complex and having to redo all the wiring completely could cause more harm than good.

The Plus-X IP-8 Adapter was designed to interface between older ARC-16 panels and the new ARC Plus system. No changes in the old wiring would be needed.

But I also needed something that would make it easier for me to get things done at the sites. Burk's older AutoPilot 3 management program uses scripts to customize

how the system will behave. Unfortunately I have no clue on the language used to write these scripts.

Writing scripts, for me, has always been a copy-and-paste ordeal. I find other scripts that were written before my time as chief engineer, piece together something and keep adjusting it until it works. So, needless to say, I wanted something easier.

The newer AutoPilot 2010, which came with the ARC Plus, provided that ease with its Jet flowchart scheme. Jet allowed me to design what I needed, and the complicated scripting was taken care of automatically.

The ARC Plus with the Plus-X IP-8 adapter was an easy install. The ARC Plus is a 2 RU system and the Plus-X Dual IP-8 Adapter is a 1 RU unit. To install, just put it in the rack, hook both units up to your

network and assign IP addresses. The ARC Plus allows IP changes on the front, while the Plus-X Dual IP-8 adapter does it over Ethernet. Configuration of the ARC Plus is, in my opinion, better than with the ARC-16.

CONFIGURATION

Burk Technology has configuration software on their website called AutoLoad Plus. I can input the IP address of the ARC Plus and it finds it. From there I can label various channels, assign statuses, create meters etc. For security reasons, I think placing this program on a remote server is better than embedding it locally within AutoPilot 2010, because if you happen to sign in as "admin" and just click on a meter to edit that channel and then forget to sign out, anyone else with access can then have some fun.

At first glance, AutoLoad Plus seems overwhelming, but if you pick just one thing to work on, such as statuses, it is actually quite easy. Any changes made and saved in the program are seen almost instantaneously in AutoPilot 2010. I had the system up and running for one of my sites in just about half an hour.

As with the other versions of AutoPilot, AutoPilot 2010 allows for custom views. This makes it so you aren't seeing all the

unused meters or statuses when you select a station. Instead, you can create a custom view for anything you want. I use mine for each station and for tower lights at my various sites. The Jet flowcharts make it easy to create something in a few minutes. Need to have it give you readings every hour for one site? No problem.

The ARC Plus, Plus-X IP-8 Adapter hardware along with the AutoPilot 2010 and AutoLoad Plus programs were easy to

use, program and required little time to set up. The combined system provided better station control and had an improved all-around look. It would be the perfect fit for any station that needs an upgrade from an older ARC-16 setup.

For information, contact Steve Dinkel at Burk Systems in Massachusetts at (978) 486-0086 or visit www.burk.com.