



Vubiquity Solves Reliability Issues by Switching to MBX

Custom Integration, Lifecycle Management and Other Services Keep Digital Content Flowing

The Challenge

After the 2009 merger of Avail Media and TVN Entertainment, one of the first operational priorities of the renamed Avail-TVN, now Vubiquity, was to solve reliability problems with the server appliances it was using to deliver live TV, video on demand and pay per view services to cable and telephone companies.

To resolve these issues, Vubiquity evaluated four integrators and MBX presented a comprehensive approach inclusive of custom integration and lifecycle management that was appealing to Vubiquity.

Switching to MBX Systems not only eliminated appliance failure but also forged a partnership that has helped Vubiquity reduce system costs, shorten delivery times, keep hardware platforms current, and simplify procurement with a real-time program data and reporting in MBX Hatch, tailored to the company's needs.

Why MBX

- Less in-house hardware overhead
- Hardware specification assistance
- Lower system costs with engineering advice
- Custom scripting to ease deployment
- Pre-loading of base images, custom BIOS, etc.
- In-place image and software updates
- Port labeling to prevent in-field wiring problems
- Design/source/stock custom faceplates
- MBX Hatch data collection customized for Vubiquity
- Component lifecycle management
- Firmware/hardware revision management
- Remote tech support for end customers
- ISO 9001:2015 certified production facility

Background

For Vubiquity, the largest digital media services company in North America, using a turnkey server appliance as the delivery mechanism for its video content is essential for smooth customer deployment. "We need to ensure that all boxes meet our precise specifications. The only way to do

that is to provide a pre-configured, pre-tested, bundled hardware appliance,” said Jeremy Morrison, Vubiquity Vice President of Sales Engineering. “Otherwise, customers will use their own servers, and the performance of our systems could be in jeopardy.”

The company began by using Supermicro platforms and was satisfied with the hardware, but was experiencing reliability issues. Vubiquity sought resolution by searching for a vendor that was more than just a supplier. Vubiquity examined options with vendors in the market and needed a vendor capable of managing the selection of hardware components to create platforms for each of its services, loading proprietary software onto each unit and ordering and installing faceplates with Vubiquity branding.

To resolve these issues while still taking advantage of Supermicro’s base hardware and price/performance benefits, Vubiquity evaluated four integrators that build appliances with Supermicro hardware. MBX stood out because of its extensive engineering, platform design, branding, quality assurance, lifecycle management and procurement support capabilities – relieving Vubiquity of many non-core responsibilities while also assuring trouble-free performance in the field.

The Process: Engineering/Integration Support

Today, Vubiquity utilizes nearly a dozen different MBX platforms built to meet the specific requirements of end customer installations as well as in-house operations. Unlike the company’s previous hardware supplier, MBX:

- > **Helps match the Supermicro platform to each application’s particular processing, memory and storage demands**, based on MBX’s engineering expertise in hardware architecture and advance knowledge of new componentry from key vendors such as Intel.
- > **Provides engineering recommendations to reduce system costs where appropriate** – in one case steering Vubiquity away from a processor with more power than the application needed, and in another changing an unneeded two-CPU motherboard to a one-CPU model.
- > **Pre-loads Vubiquity’s base images, custom BIOS and custom MAC address scripts** at the factory along with performing bench and burn-in testing, freeing Vubiquity staff for other duties.
- > **Troubleshoots various technical issues**, such as resolving an initial MAC address scripting problem related to the device manager in Vubiquity’s operating system that incorrectly recognized and assigned addresses to the network interfaces.

“We’re in the business of digital media services, not engineering and configuring appliances. Simply choosing a standard platform from a catalog and getting an empty box shipped to us was never a good solution,” Morrison said. “MBX’s ability to help us optimize our hardware as well as handle tasks like image loading and burn-in testing saves a lot of manpower on our end, shortens our turnaround times, and puts the best and most reliable appliances at customer sites.”

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Branding to Lifecycle Management

Other value-added MBX services not provided by Vubiquity’s former supplier are helping streamline branding, facilitate end customer setup and technical support, and adjust platform architecture when component manufacturers announce an end-of-life date for a particular processor, hard drive or other part. MBX is providing:

- > **Vubiquity-branded faceplate design, sourcing, stocking and installation**, eliminating occasional sizing errors, out-of-stocks and other complications encountered when Vubiquity was responsible for purchasing and installing its own bezels.
- > **Back-of-machine branding** with numbered ports that match each unit’s MAC address structure, simplifying wiring in the field and consequently preventing customer configuration problems.
- > **Remote support and troubleshooting for Vubiquity’s customers**, helping prevent box replacement in the field and associated delays that may impact cable and telephone companies’ video delivery services.
- > **Lifecycle management that flags outdated components at least 90 days before they are sunsetted** by the manufacturer, making it possible to implement build changes or even re-engineer the platform without shipment delays to Vubiquity customers.

In addition, in a major advantage for procurement, MBX’s Hatch has eliminated the need for Vubiquity to phone its system builder dozens of times every month. The company now has access to real-time data on everything from each customer’s order history and current order status to appliance specifications, inventory, shipments, pricing, RMAs and custom fields added at Vubiquity’s request.

“In the past, we needed to call our supplier to get even the most basic information, and there was always a delay. MBX Hatch is a huge time-saver for my staff,” said Liz Armbruster, VP Billing, Settlement and Procurement for Vubiquity. “The ability to get real-time data without having to pick up the phone is invaluable.”

The Results: Hardware Program Simplified

With these and other services, MBX has transformed Vubiquity’s hardware program in a manner that most appliance manufacturer/integrators cannot or will not deliver unless the customer is ordering thousands of units at a time.

“If you’re buying 5,000 boxes at a time from a Dell or HPE, you have more influence. If you’re ordering 20 or 50 systems, you’re just a name and address with no special privileges,” Morrison noted. “A

company like MBX that is dedicated exclusively to appliance manufacturing and support is big enough to provide fast turnaround, reasonable pricing and comprehensive quality assurance, but is still responsive to our needs.”

In fact, MBX has taken over virtually all hardware management responsibilities, saving time for Vubiquity as well as strengthening the quality of the company’s appliance platforms. That makes for satisfied Vubiquity customers, too.

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