

Jacaranda FM gets portable, reliable broadband connectivity

Jacaranda FM is reportedly South Africa's largest independent commercial radio station with a reach of around two million people across half of South Africa including: Gauteng, the North West, Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces.



The radio station often engages in roadshows, which take broadcasts to small towns across South Africa, requiring stable, reliable internet communications and coverage. When previous methods of obtaining this connectivity became too costly and admin intensive, Jacaranda FM turned to Jasco and the que-Skye solution from Q-Kon to provide the solution. The que-Skye solution delivers reliable, high-performance satellite broadband internet services at low cost across sub-Saharan Africa for fast, portable and, above all, affordable connectivity in even the most rural location.

"In the past, when Jacaranda FM embarked upon one of its roadshows, it had to organise fixed-line ISDN connectivity in order to broadcast back to the studio. This is a time-consuming process that was also becoming cost ineffective, as it required forward planning with no level of flexibility. The que-Skye VSAT solution is the ideal solution to this challenge. It is available on a month-to-month, prepaid basis, which makes it highly cost-effective, and set-up is fast and easy. All users need to do is put the dish down and aim it at the satellite, and, within an hour, they will have fast, reliable internet connectivity anywhere in southern Africa," said Leanne Hobdey of Jasco Enterprise.

In addition to the necessary connectivity back to studio, Jacaranda FM also required the ability to transmit high-quality voice and music from any remote location on its roadshows. The ability of the que-Skye system was demonstrated to Jacaranda FM at Q-Kon's premises, and based on this proof of concept the radio station purchased one unit. After several months, its usefulness was so apparent that a second unit was purchased. This ensures that at any remote site, one satellite channel can be used for transmission and the other for internet connectivity. It also provides full redundancy at any outside broadcast event.

Several unique features

"While VSAT is not a new solution, que-Skye has several unique features that aid in its ability to deliver flexible, affordable satellite connectivity. It offers a pay-per-use model, which means that when the solution is not being used, Jacaranda FM does not pay for connectivity. This makes it far more cost-effective, as many suppliers will only offer satellite connectivity on a yearly or 24-month contract basis. Traffic is not throttled or shaped in any form, and Quality of Service (QoS) provisions can prioritise real-time traffic over standard data, so it is ideal for Jacaranda FM's application to stream music and voice," said Hobdey.

In addition to these unique features, the que-Skye solution is also the only satellite provider with a local teleport, located in Midrand. Other providers with teleports outside of South Africa require backhaul via undersea cables, which increases latency, while the que-Skye locally based system provides the lowest latency of any VSAT provider in South Africa. The solution can guarantee the quality of two voice channels over the link, in addition to internet access, making it ideal for many applications where remote connectivity is a requirement.

"With the que-Skye solution, there are some technical considerations, such as an approximate two-second delay that we need to factor in for broadcasts, and the challenges caused by heavy cloud and thunderstorms. In addition, the satellite di

mounting hardware is intended for a permanent installation and does take strain with constant adjustment; however, the freedom we now have with the equipment more than outweighs the challenges," said Andrew Pike, technical manager of Jacaranda FM.

These benefits include the ability to set up an outside broadcast at very short notice and to broadcast and access the internet from anywhere regardless of available fixed-line infrastructure. In addition, costs are dramatically lower than previous solutions involving fixed-line service. Currently, a three-hour broadcast uses only about 350MB data, and figuring another 2GB for internet activities, the total cost is under R2000, whereas previous ISDN installations cost around R5000 per broadcast, excluding internet access.

"In March this year we were able to do a Breakfast Show Roadshow where we went to 13 venues in 10 days across Limpopo and Mpumalanga. Without the flexibility of the que-Skye solution, this would have been impossible," Pike concluded.

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