



User Report: WKYT-TV

WKYT-TV first started using AXIS map programs in November 2006. Originally broadcasting in SD, the station moved to HD in April 2007 and since then, has been using the HD version of AXIS maps. WKYT-TV utilizes many traditional broadcast technologies, but was one of the first stations to go HD. A lot of its structure is typical of a local TV station, but by embracing different styles of output and creativity, it's generally acknowledged as being at the cutting-edge of broadcasting.

Transitioning the station to HD was a “nightmare”, but the AXIS program was one of the easiest to migrate to this format. However, the AXIS HD environment does have some issues such as the rendering time, compared to its SD equivalent. This is particularly relevant when working with animated maps, as the system can only render one map at a time. This is not exactly a complaint, but working with bigger files has meant that instead of generating three SD animated maps in an hour, the station now only achieves one. Therefore, WKYT-TV does not broadcast as many animated maps as it used to. Speeding up the HD rendering would be a massive improvement and benefit.

The decision to purchase the AXIS system was through a recommendation by a News Director at one of WKYT-TV's sister television stations (there are 28 in the group). Each station is given the opportunity to make individual purchase decisions on technology, but AXIS is definitely recommended for this particular group of stations.

WKYT-TV is actually two TV stations in one. It is a CBS news affiliate and the local FOX news network. AXIS is utilized for both these networks and both have very different looks – the title bar, headline across the map, etc.

After the decision was made to use AXIS, the WKYT-TV art department started working with AXIS to incorporate the elements of the individual looks required. For instance, each city had to look the same or be represented with the same color dot. This then became the template for each network/map and AXIS created a consistent look and feel that would be utilized in all circumstances. By completing this process, a uniform look was created for all maps ensuring a consistent look and feel for WKYT-TV.

Once the look/feel was confirmed, it was time to engage the operators who would be responsible for getting the maps on-air. Training the operators was done via the web, which makes total sense as it's a web-based product. But training this way had its limitations as the AXIS trainer couldn't actually see how the WKYT-TV operator was working. An interactive,



webcast training process would be a huge advantage – especially when training large groups of people.

In utilizing AXIS maps, the creative workflow has changed significantly. The process is no longer the full responsibility of the art department. Prior to adopting AXIS, the art department spent huge amounts of time creating maps for newscasting and struggled to keep up with other projects. Due to the training and intuitive technology of AXIS maps, a wide variety of people involved in newscasting are now responsible for creating the maps. This has drastically changed the way that WKYT-TV broadcasts maps and has improved creative ownership for each newscaster.

Although there was initial resistance from the news producers (they already have a lot to do), it's now become part of the culture and something that individuals can be proud of. By having personal responsibility for how the maps reflect the story and the program, the quality has improved and each map is far more specific to the city, the story, and the situation. Utilizing AXIS has also meant that this flexibility and superiority in map creation can be achieved during the evenings and weekends when fewer staff are available. If there's a late-breaking news item, a map to accompany the story can be created online, at home or even during the program itself. This has given WKYT-TV incredible versatility and flexibility that is now second nature to all who work there.

This has also created some healthy internal competition to see who can create the best-looking maps! For instance, one of the map templates was recently given to the art department for 'treatment' by taking a cut of a football stadium, putting it into the center of the map and showing the parking around the stadium. It's not just a map anymore! Another example is a four county car chase. AXIS doesn't allow WKYT-TV to do mapping of the entire route, so AXIS was used to plot where the chase started and where it finished and by adding in the art department, the roads were highlighted to show the exact route of the chase. Without the templated maps of AXIS, neither of these projects could have been done in time and would not have been as relevant.

AXIS also appreciates that WKYT-TV works to tight deadlines and is typical of how a news broadcast environment operates. WKYT-TV has experienced very few issues with the AXIS system (two or three could be thought of) and all service/support for any such issue has been resolved quickly and within the timescale required.

In summary, WKYT-TV is an innovative and thorough user of the AXIS maps package and is proud of what it achieves with templated graphics, together with the creativity of the in-house art department.