Customer Success

Virtually connecting creatives for a Subaru commercial shoot in the remote Canadian Rockies

Dejero CellSat streamlined live communications and video transfer between disparate creative teams working together virtually to produce a stunning commercial in the remotest parts of Alberta

Created by production company OPC and shot on a secluded Canadian mountainside in Banff National Park, this striking commercial was brought to life by B2B integrated connectivity expert First Mile Technologies thanks to Dejero's game-changing CellSat service.

Challenge

Filmed in one of the most spectacular yet harshest backdrops in the world, just below a significant ridge of Fortress Mountain in Alberta, Canada, this commercial shoot involved dynamic winter action. It was early into the pandemic and worldwide travel restrictions were in place, leaving production crews with an unexpected set of challenges. With the creative teams and commercial agencies scattered across North America, they needed a reliable solution to remain in constant communication with the six-person team on set.

About First Mile Technologies

First Mile Technologies provides B2B integrated connectivity by blending existing traditional and low orbit satellite, cellular, fiber and internet networks through their own innovative patented technologies, transporting live video and data with speed, security and reliability. Their mission for "creative connectivity solutions for the future" is inspired by their innovative backbone.

FIRST MILE TECHNOLOGIES

Dejero

The financial and logistical hurdles typically presented by limited or non-existent cellular connectivity in remote shooting locations like this make it necessary to rely on satellite technology to overcome connectivity challenges. Traditionally, this requires a heavy investment of time and money in terms of setup and subsequent use. Establishing a satellite connection in challenging conditions has never been a simple task. Until recently, it required a huge effort to scout locations, establish line of sight between the antenna and satellite, and ensure the kit is located on a stable, level platform. These preparations alone require dedicated specialists and greater resources than a more typical shoot in a less remote area.

"Usually, from a mountainside or a location where connectivity is severely limited, the crew would expect to return from set with nothing but a few stills, which hindered off-set creatives and agencies in providing meaningful and informed feedback, slowing the collaboration process," said Brandon Cooper, president at First Mile Technologies.

> *"This type of technology is a revolution for the film, TV and commercial production industry, allowing us to take things to the next level in terms of where we can film, at what cost, and the reliability and speeds at which we will be able to transfer video and data over a mix of cellular and satellite."*
>
> *Brandon Cooper, president at First Mile Technologies*

When required, satellite connectivity was blended in automatically using a VSAT link delivered over ST Engineering iDirect's Dialog® platform that features MX-DMA®, the industry's most efficient, dynamic return technology that automatically scales to meet bandwidth demands.

Solution

First Mile Technologies used the Dejero CellSat service to set up a flexible, portable workflow on location for OPC. It delivered connectivity to and from set by dynamically blending cellular and satellite connections, allowing the distributed creative and agency teams to collaborate in real-time, without interruption, using live video streamed from a location that would previously have been too remote to connect to.

The infrastructure streamed the live video feed from a Dejero EnGo mobile transmitter using the Dejero CellSat service for internet access, to a Dejero WayPoint receiver at the headquarters in Toronto. From there, the stream was sent to various platforms, including Zoom and First Mile's own Web RTC platform for real-time, virtual collaboration.

The EnGo takes the live feed from the camera, encodes it, and sends it over the available connections. Using SIMs from multiple carriers, Dejero *Smart Blending Technology* aggregates available networks and dynamically manages the fluctuating bandwidth, packet loss, and latency differences of individual connections in real-time. The result is enhanced reliability and sufficient bandwidth to send high-quality video from remote locations.

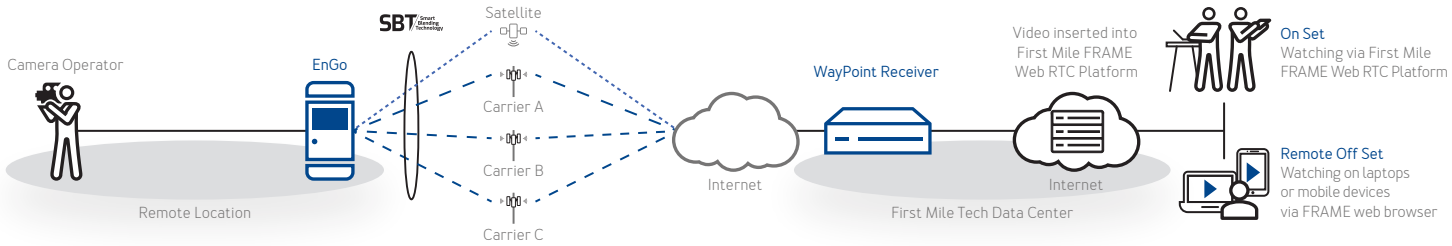
First Mile used Dejero CellSat technology to set up a flexible, portable workflow within the remote Canadian Rockies.

To prepare for areas where there was little to no cellular connectivity, First Mile Technologies used the CellSat solution – adding a C-Com Satellite Systems MP-100T satellite antenna to use as a primary connection path for the live video transmission.

Using the MP-100T as part of the CellSat service, the production team was able to blend the satellite connection with the limited cellular connectivity to establish a resilient link for the live transmission. The distributed creative team were able to view the high-resolution video feeds through their web browsers.

Additionally, because the team on-set had limited network connectivity on their mobile phones, First Mile Technologies was able to use available bandwidth to create a wireless hotspot as well as providing access to a VoIP phone line built into the rig.

"The OPC crew was provided with internet connectivity in a place where there typically isn't any at all," said Cooper. "Cell phones just don't work and it's difficult to communicate to anyone in the shadow of Fortress Mountain. We were able to give the crew internet access, for email and light browsing by creating a wireless hotspot, as well as access to our VoIP phone line that is built into our rig. Once connected they were able to use the Wi-Fi calling functions on their iPhones to talk directly to client/agency staff who were watching remotely."



The on-site crew leveraged the reliability of *Smart Blending Technology* featured in the EnGo to transmit the commercial footage to First Mile's Data Center. They then distributed it to client and creative teams to view and give real-time feedback.

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The internet connectivity and bandwidth provided by the Dejero technology gave the on-set team access to VoIP to communicate with those collaborating remotely.

Results

The OPC team and their production counterparts were able to send, receive, and watch live footage from Fortress Mountain on a simple but reliable high-performance platform in real time. This allowed everyone to collaborate and provide instant feedback and approvals to those who were shooting in a place that would normally be impossible to communicate from.

Through its vast experience, the First Mile Technologies team has found that nothing rivals Dejero CellSat in terms of ease of use and reliability. “CellSat adds great value to our line-up,” said Cooper. “It streamlined every single aspect of critical communication and feedback for this job, delivering resilient connectivity from a remote mountainside where usually the delivery of only a handful of stills would have been possible. It’s incredibly simple to set up with flexible data plans and a unified service that makes life simpler for everyone.”

Not only does this powerful connectivity enable the data offloading immediately from set to post-production rather than waiting for hard drives to arrive, working in the cloud safeguards against the failure or loss of physical drives. A securely encrypted virtual network ensures that content will not be stolen, misused, or interfered with. Collaborating in real-time and not worrying about internet connectivity while on location provides more creative freedom than ever before.

“This type of technology is a revolution for the film, TV and commercial production industry, allowing us to take things to the next level in terms of where we can film, at what cost, and the reliability and speeds at which we will be able to transfer video and data over a mix of cellular and satellite.”

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John Scarth, line producer at OPC and supervisor for the Subaru commercial, was very excited by the concept behind CellSat and took a leap of faith, deciding to run with the Dejero CellSat instead of a more traditional point-to-point setup. He was ecstatic at the result and sees great potential for this type of solution elsewhere.

"The use of the Dejero package, including CellSat and EnGo, was integral to the success of this shoot in the Canadian Rockies," concluded Scarth. "From a snow-covered mountain top, we were able to stream live to our offsite client with low latency and rock solid connection. This technology allowed us to have a real time conversation with our client and work as though they were on set with us. With high-quality, reliable streaming becoming a key part of production, the Dejero platform is a turnkey solution for any environment."

Pre-COVID, it would have been essential for the entire production crew, its creatives, directors, producers, plus agency representatives, to be present on set, which meant flying them in, accommodation and hospitality – another huge logistical undertaking and a substantial cost. With Dejero's connectivity solutions, being present on set can now become a choice rather than a necessity.

Dejero EnGo enabled OPC to stream the video feed directly from the set for remote creative collaboration.

Need help building the right solution for your connectivity needs?

Start the conversation today

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