



Manchester becomes magnet for media moguls.



BT helps to create a world-class hub for creative, digital and media industries, with a state-of-the-art managed network.

Manchester – already a major centre for the creative, digital and media industries – is really making its mark on the media map with the building of the ground-breaking MediaCityUK development, which features BT technology at its heart. Starting from the ground up with no existing architecture or infrastructure to constrain them, BT and developers, The Peel Group, are working together to create a world class hub for innovation and content creation, within a community environment.

Located at Salford Quays on the banks of Manchester's historic ship canal, the MediaCityUK site is the first phase of a long-term scheme which has the potential to grow over 200 acres. It features one of the biggest HD studio complexes in Europe, with 7 HD studios, as well as two audio studios, one of which is dedicated to the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra. Two residential towers house apartments, while shops, restaurants, coffee shops, offices and a hotel are all part of the facilities on offer for those who live or work at MediaCityUK.

Says Paul Newman, The Peel Group's communications director: "Our aim is to bring together a range of ingredients that will make MediaCityUK a great place to live, work and visit. In order to help deliver this vision, we needed to attract bigger media businesses, which would in turn attract the editing, animation and creative companies who help them produce their programmes. For such companies – and therefore for us – technology is one of the major differentiators."

“ BT has built us a network which will help us become a magnet for the most high-flying media companies in the UK.

Stuart Thorley
Head of technology, Mediacityuk

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The media industry has rich content and distribution requirements, so the site is underpinned by a state-of-the-art managed network, capable of managing multiple gigabytes of data. More than 20 million metres of optical fibre connect all the buildings within MediaCityUK (enough to stretch from Salford to Sydney), to carry voice, data, high and standard definition video, and wireless communication services.

Secure, flexible network.

"We wanted a secure, but borderless, infrastructure which would enable members of our community to collaborate by sharing information and data quickly and reliably," says Stuart Thorley, MediaCityUK's head of technology: "BT has built us a network

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which will handle file sharing, digital signage, cloud computing, building management and more, helping us become a magnet for the most highflying media companies in the UK.”

The site is covered by a Wide Area Network, supplemented by in-building Local Area Networks and Wireless LANs. The high capacity, resilient 10 Gigabit network will cater for bandwidth hungry applications, offering some of the UK's fastest data and file transfer speeds. Tenants will be able to share high definition photos and files, creating content in one studio and moving it easily to a data suite elsewhere on site.

This is part of a wider programme of services provided by BT Business Custom Solutions that covers telephony and internet. It is underpinned by one of the largest private fibre network deployments from BT Openreach.

The full solution is managed by BT on a 24x7 basis with simplified billing and regular performance reviews.

MediaCityUK is confident that the functionality and benefits that its ICT network offers will prove an attractive concept for tenants: “In addition to the obvious speed benefits, our tenants will have the flexibility to access their wireless networks from anywhere on the site, so can work from a restaurant or coffee shop as easily as they can at their desk,” explains Paul Newman. “A move to a new building on site will be much easier, with our IP telephony system making sure their profile follows them. Plus, the high-speed networks will easily run video conferencing, saving time and travel for users.”

MediaCityUK is already home to major occupiers including BBC North, ITV, Coronation Street, the University of Salford and Satellite Information Services (SIS). Nearly 2,500 BBC staff working across a wide range of news, sport, and children's programming, are ensconced at MediaCityUK, plus staff from the corporation's future media and technology department.

ITV is moving its production and news teams, as well as building a new Coronation Street facility on Trafford Wharf, which is due to become operational in 2013.

“In addition to the larger corporate names, we have more than 80 smaller creative businesses at MediaCityUK, such as TV producers, marketing agencies and computer game designers,” says Paul.

“Our workspaces give small start-ups the chance to be near the centre of this media hub, with self-contained office suites, breakout space and meeting rooms. We like to offer total flexibility to potential occupiers, and technology is an important ingredient within that context.”

Job creation.

Future generations of creatives will also be given a helping hand, with the University of Salford setting up a campus on the site to immerse its students in a professional media environment and give them access to the latest technology, underpinned by BT's network.

For MediaCityUK's developers, BT was a natural technology partner because of its proven track record, expertise and strong portfolio of solutions. “The team clearly understood our needs and vision, deploying a solution that it supports, monitors and manages – keeping overheads down and freeing up our time,” explained Stuart.

“MediaCityUK, due to its unique nature, has been very organic and fluid in terms of overall requirements and defined tenant offerings. Nothing of its kind has been done on this sort of scale before, so we weren't sure what our tenants would want. BT has worked very hard, and to challenging deadlines, to ensure that its solutions give us a platform for growth, flexibility and agility. Together, and with the support of a variety of partners, we aim to deliver an amazing experience for existing and potential tenants.”

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