

I am the IT guy and engineer for a group of three AM radio stations in North Georgia, The Wolf Creek Broadcasting Network. The owners are fairly aggressive and have allowed me a free hand in the technology of things such as state of the art automation software and streaming show content amongst the stations over the Internet. This substantially reduced their cost of operation when compared to leased data lines.

It was not difficult to convince them of the benefits of a VOIP phone system to inter-connect the stations over the Internet a couple of years ago. I installed an Asterisk based phone system called Asterisk at Home (now called Trixbox) and completely eliminated their inter-station long distance calls. This phone system works very well, but we left analog lines to the studio boards out of the system. I was never able to get the audio perfect enough to put on the air.

Then, this past spring, Wolf Creek won an FM frequency in the frequency auction, which meant new studios and a move of the corporate office to the Young Harris, Georgia station. We built state-of-the-art studios with a lot of equipment from Harris Broadcasting. This also required a new, larger capacity, analog TDM card for the phone server. I had used an echo canceling Sangoma A200 at a previous installation and liked the way it sounded. A Sangoma 8-FXO, 4-FXS echo canceling card was ordered, installed and it sounded great. Good enough that I was going to put this card on the air.

With a Labor Day kickoff for the new FM, I had a plate full. We got the FM on the air in the middle of August, but the studio boards were running late and were not going to be in until late September. For you radio folks reading this, we used a 12-channel, band board as a studio board for 6 weeks, a challenge all in itself. We made business decisions to leave the AM programming at the Copperhill, Tennessee location until the new studio boards could be installed. I did not want to have to swap out the board in a live studio if I didn't need to.

Well, stuff happens. A personnel change forced the AM programming to move to the new facility ahead of schedule. The only real issue to this was a two hour show we aired daily called "The Swap Shop". The call-in line for that show was in the Copperhill facility and I had to get it to Young Harris in 36 hours. I wired the Sangoma card into the board at Young Harris and at showtime on Monday, and we forwarded the calls from that line to an incoming line at Young Harris. Once I resolved a problem with the old studio board it sounded great, but we were dropping calls like flies. I tried everything, but nothing would resolve the issue until I trapped the incoming line at Copperhill into the VOIP system there and sent the calls, via VOIP, to Young Harris. It turns out that telephone company call forwarding and a high volume phone line don't mix. The first call would work fine, but the second call would be forwarded to a busy line and send congestion to the caller. The caller would hang up, but the line stayed open and by the time our jock answered it, there was not one there. Moving this to VOIP kept the line busy at Copperhill until the call had completed.

Using the Sangoma card was one of the best decisions I made during this transition. It just works and the audio is perfect. Our Swap Shop callers call in on an analog line plugged into the Sangoma card, the phone server forwards that call to an FXS port on the same Sangoma card and from there, through a 20 year old telephone hybrid and onto a state-of-the-art Harris studio board.

If you want to hear our Sangoma A200 in operation, you can. Go to "<http://www.thewolfam.com>" and click on the wolf wearing the headphones. The Swap Shop is on between 10 am and noon eastern time in the US. Drop in and give us a listen and hear a little "Redneck Radio."