Business Continuity Starts with Knowing What You Have

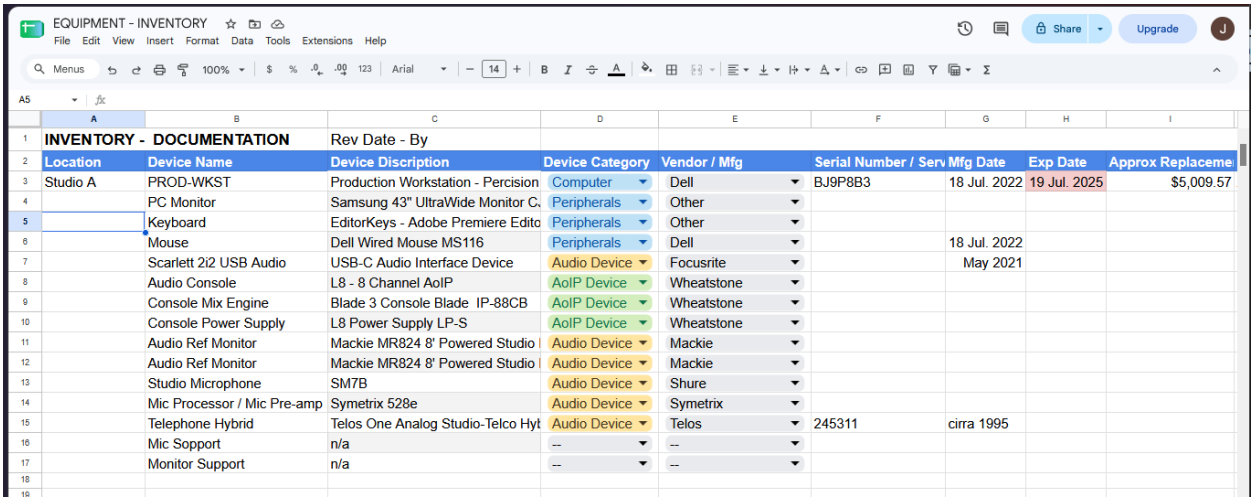
Continuing the ‘Things to know before you need them’ series.

Equipment inventory and lifecycle planning can help reduce downtime, control costs, and keep your station ready for the unexpected.

Systems fail; they fail spectacularly, catastrophically, and more often than not, anticlimactically. I’ve lost count of how many times in the last month a call into the support line started with. “Thunderstorms rolled through last night [..]” or “We lost power over the weekend [..].”

When broadcast systems go down, the biggest delay is not the repair itself — It is figuring out what failed, where it is, how it is configured, and whether there is a replacement plan. IF you don’t have a business continuity or disaster recovery plan, welp, this calls for a spreadsheet.

I’m an engineer; of course I have a spreadsheet for that!



EQUIPMENT - INVENTORY

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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	INVENTORY - DOCUMENTATION		Rev Date - By						
2	Location	Device Name	Device Discription	Device Category	Vendor / Mfg	Serial Number / Serv	Mfg Date	Exp Date	Approx Replaceme
3	Studio A	PROD-WKST	Production Workstation - Percision	Computer	Dell	BJ9P8B3	18 Jul. 2022	19 Jul. 2025	$5,009.57
4		PC Monitor	Samsung 43" UltraWide Monitor C.	Peripherals	Other				
5		Keyboard	EditorKeys - Adobe Premiere Edito	Peripherals	Other				
6		Mouse	Dell Wired Mouse MS116	Peripherals	Dell		18 Jul. 2022		
7		Scarlett 2i2 USB Audio	USB-C Audio Interface Device	Audio Device	Focusrite		May 2021		
8		Audio Console	L8 - 8 Channel AoIP	AoIP Device	Wheatstone				
9		Console Mix Engine	Blade 3 Console Blade IP-88CB	AoIP Device	Wheatstone				
10		Console Power Supply	L8 Power Supply LP-S	AoIP Device	Wheatstone				
11		Audio Ref Monitor	Mackie MR824 8' Powered Studio	Audio Device	Mackie				
12		Audio Ref Monitor	Mackie MR824 8' Powered Studio	Audio Device	Mackie				
13		Studio Microphone	SM7B	Audio Device	Shure				
14		Mic Processor / Mic Pre-amp	Symetrix 528e	Audio Device	Symetrix				
15		Telephone Hybrid	Telos One Analog Studio-Telco Hyt	Audio Device	Telos	245311	cirra 1995		
16		Mic Sopport	n/a	--	--				
17		Monitor Support	n/a	--	--				

The screenshot above is an equipment inventory sheet I used at my last stations.

A current inventory gives your team a reliable map of the systems that keep you on the air. At minimum, track your studio equipment: automation servers and workstations, audio console(s), and network switches.

This does not need to be overtly complicated.

Details to include, where possible;
- Vendor Information
- Purchase Date (If known) + Warranty status
- Make / Model + Serial numbers

- Purchase Price and Replacement costs
- Key configuration notes (eg 2TB Storage HDD, Dual NIC, ASI Audio Card)

Plan Replacements Before Failures Happen

Lifecycle planning will help you avoid the surprise of aging hardware. Instead of waiting for a server, workstation, switch, or audio device to fail, identify what is nearing end of life and plan replacements on a realistic schedule.

A good rule of thumb is;
-10 years of reliable service for a server
-5-7 years for a workstation
-3-5 years for a laptop
-20 years for a Transmitter
-15-20 years for a broadcast console

Planning these replacements are generally less expensive than emergency purchases, rush shipping, and last-minute integration work.

Be Ready for Broadcast Emergencies

Good documentation is especially valuable during storms, power events, staffing changes, or unexpected equipment failures. If your team can quickly see what is installed and how it connects, recovery becomes much faster.

Keep this documentation somewhere staff can reach it, not only on one local computer. Create a recurring reminder in your calendar to review it. Especially, before major events or storm seasons like tornadoes, hurricanes, or ice storms.

A Simple First Step

Pick one room this week and document the equipment in it. Start with listing what's there then flesh out the basic details.

- Mic 1 - EV20 - Broadcasters General Store – Approx. 12 yrs old
- Production Wkst – HP Z2 – iMedia -purchased Aug 2026 – 2TB HDD, additional NIC
- USB Audio Interface – Focusrite 2i2 – Amazon – approx. 5 years ago

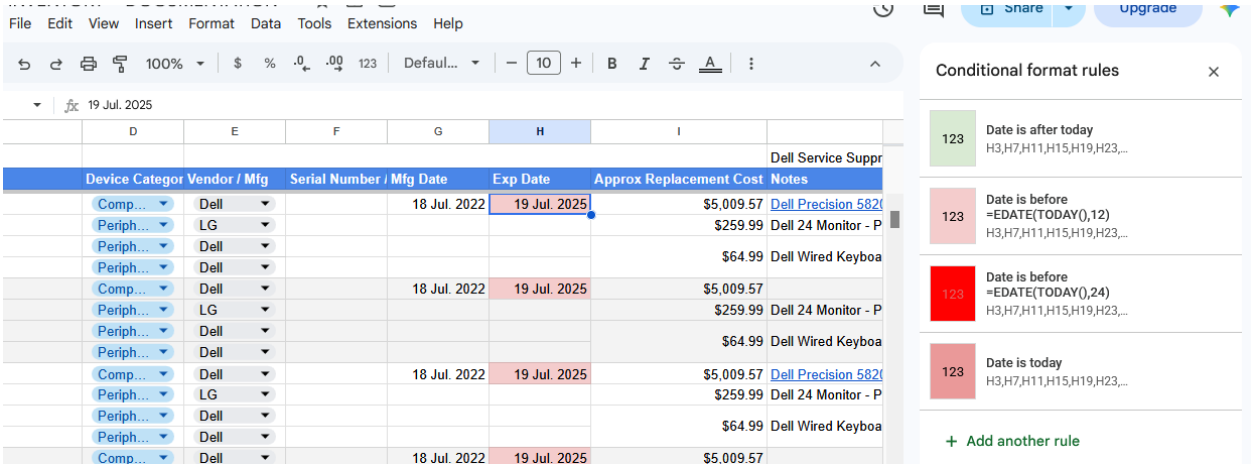
Next week, add another tab in your spreadsheet for another studio. Over time, you will build a practical resource that will help reduce downtime, control costs, and protect your operation when the unexpected happens.

Business continuity is not just about backup equipment. It is about knowing what you have, knowing when it should be replaced, and giving your team the information they need to stay on the air.

That should be enough to get on with, I'll see you next month.

Continue reading if you want to add conditional formatting.

In my first example, you may have noticed that the 'Expiry Date' for the workstation was 'pink'. Excel, OpenOffice Calc and Google Sheets allow for conditional formatting.



The above example is how I set up my Google Sheets.
-'Light Green' to visually indicate that the machine in question is less than 5 years old,or covered under the manufacturer's warranty.
-'Light Pink'- 'Pink'12 months past the manufacturer's warranty, but still serviceable.
-'Red' 24 months past the 5-year mark, increased service costs and possible compatibility issues, should be replaced within the year.