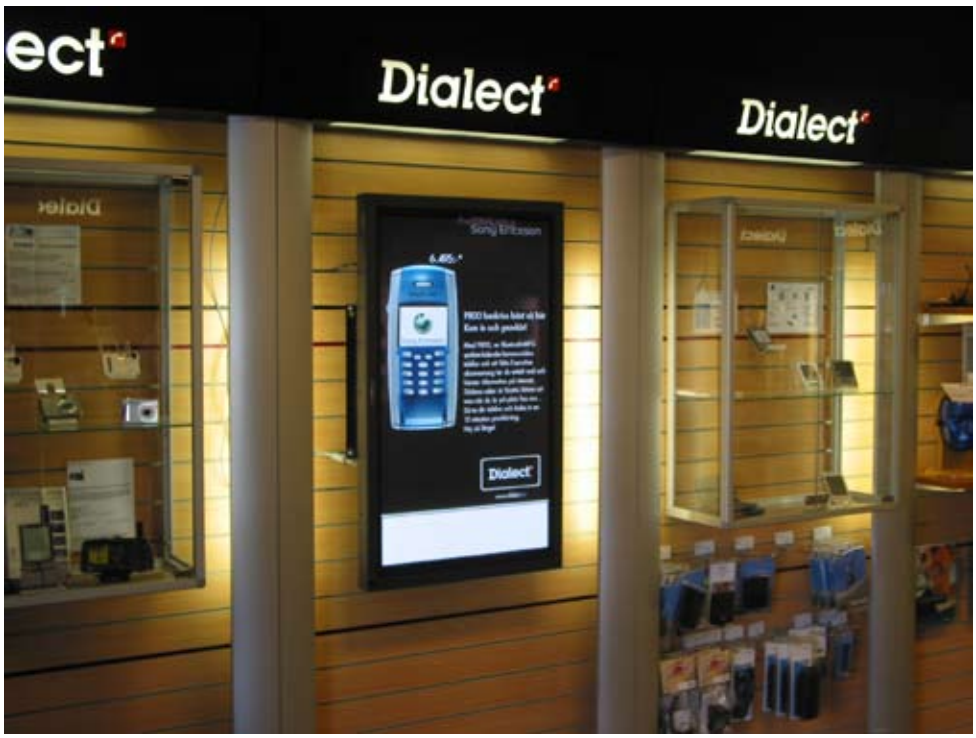
WHITE PAPER

Making Money and Saving Money with Digital Signage



The core purpose of digital signage for any business is to make or save money, but this medium can be used in many different ways. Learn how various industries are monetizing on-screen communication.

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Digital Signage Today

It's very simple - those deploying digital signage during today's economic climate are most likely doing so for one of two reasons (or both, in some cases): they either want to make money or save money. Gone are the days of putting up fancy screens just to make businesses more aesthetically pleasing. Today's digital signage networks are streamlined for a purpose, and that is to make or save the user as much money as possible.

With so many options and applications, there isn't just one way to produce revenue or cut costs with this medium. This white paper looks at nine verticals that have seen financial success and ROI using digital signage and offers tips on how to do so. Also included in each section is the case study of a Scala customer that has recently completed a successful digital signage application, as proof that on-screen messaging is working in the marketplace.

Healthcare

Making money

Host a healthcare network — Host an ad network, such as Care Media, which can sell and manage ads on screens. Since the healthcare facility owns the network, there is minimal time involvement and much money to be earned.

Sell ads to pharmaceutical reps — One of the advantages of doctor's office and hospital waiting rooms is that they have long dwell times, as well as captive audiences. This time can be used to show longer-than-normal digital signage ads and content about new medications and procedures offered at that location. Like with pharmaceutical ads on television, waiting room viewers should be prompted to ask their doctors about these offerings when they see them.

Saving money

Digital wayfinding — Hospital facilities can be confusing for visitors, especially during stressful times, and existing wayfinding signage can be upgraded to digital. In addition to providing a better customer experience, the technology allows hospital employees to concentrate on their tasks, instead of on escorting patients and visitors.

Case study: Monopoly Media introduces Clinic TV with Scala software

Monopoly Media, a Scala-certified partner, expanded its digital signage network, based on Scala software, to 40 private medical clinics in Bucharest, Romania.

The network, named Clinic TV, entertains and informs patients waiting for their medical appointments. The objective of Clinic TV is not only to achieve a more modern image and improve customer service, but also to generate revenue by allowing third-party advertising on the network.

Finding themselves waiting in the clinic's lobby for an average period of 15 to 20 minutes, patients are more than willing to be informed and entertained and therefore represent a target audience for direct campaigns and brand advertisements.

Throughout all high-traffic areas in the Bucharest clinics, 40 42-inch plasma screens and 32 19-inch LCD screens are used to narrowcast content via a high-speed Internet connection.

"Since Clinic TV is a specific, targeted channel, the nature of most content is medical and includes information on different diseases and their cures, medical tips, medical curiosities, answers to frequently asked questions, symptoms for diseases and so on," Gabriel Faflei, Monopoly Media's general manager, said. "Also, the digital signage network is the perfect medium for third parties promoting different medical seminars, symposia, conferences and also advertising for medical products that do not require medical prescription."

Additionally, the clinic can distribute its own messages to patients. Therefore, the network can broadcast information concerning the clinic's floor plans and doctors on duty and also promote services offered by the clinic or special promotions. Monopoly Media plans to enhance the Clinic TV network in Bucharest and across the country.

Monopoly Media expanded its digital signage network, based on Scala software, to 40 private medical clinics in Bucharest, Romania.

Government/public sector

Making money

Government employees are consumers, too — There are many opportunities for advertising on government digital signage that can appeal specifically to its audience. For example, nonprofit organizations, such as public libraries, can advertise special fundraising events like book sales, or cafeterias in large government buildings can drive additional traffic with advertised specials.

Saving money

Internal communication — Messaging via digital signs not only can cut the hard costs of printing and supplies, but it also can alleviate the soft costs of human time spent delivering envelopes, memos and messages.

Case study: Scala provides critical information for Miami-Dade emergency services

When a natural disaster or terrorist threat strikes south Florida, the Office of Emergency Management, or OEM, for Miami-Dade County springs into action. The OEM coordinates all aspects of disaster management for the county, including the organization of fire, public safety and medical services, traffic situations and updates on shelters for displaced residents. To ensure critical information is updated rapidly, OEM needed a software system that could display immediate changes.

For this, OEM turned to Scala Inc. and Scala's software to update information without service interruptions. Scala's software is used to display live information on five plasma screens set up for specific sections of OEM's Emergency Operations Center, or EOC, each concentrating on a different element of the disaster.

Miami-Dade County's OEM turned to Scala's software to update information without service interruptions.

The EOC contains 72 seats occupied by representatives of each agency or function to ensure that the community's needs are met. In times of peak emergency, 200 to 300 people — including government officials and the media — crowd into the EOC.

"We gather all the information to get a true picture of the disaster, assess the needs of the community and then distribute scarce resources," said Bill Johnson, OEM's assistant director. "Scala's software allows us to respond to information as soon as it is available — something that becomes incredibly important in times of disaster."

The software is used to update the five information service screens that include Miami-Dade County's areas of human services, public safety, infrastructure and operations. Since response time is critical for the OEM, four operators collect and update details via keyboards, and the data is simultaneously updated and displayed on the screens. Key areas include the capacity of all area shelters, public safety board listings of the location and hours of curfews, possible automobile traffic issues, road and bridge closings and power and communication interruptions.

The large operations screen provides an overall snapshot of what already has been done and future plans. "It is essential for the people at these tables to know what the others are doing. So we have five status boards that are continually updated," Johnson said.

"Prior to our use of Scala, we relied on flip charts and dry-erase markers, pieces of paper and projection monitors. Having someone brush by a board and accidentally wipe off our disaster plans has been known to happen."

Education

Making money

Tap organizations — Schools with digital signage networks can lease out a portion of screen real estate to student organizations, which in turn sell ads on the network. The school keeps an agreed-upon percentage of the proceeds.

College town sponsors — Especially at universities, local businesses that cater to students such as restaurants, bars, and tanning salons are always looking for new ways to reach their target audience. Advertising on a digital signage education network gives them that opportunity.

Saving money

Make bulletin boards electronic — It doesn't take long for college bulletin boards to become cluttered with posters and signs. Converting these to digital signs makes them more aesthetically pleasing, gives the university complete control over what messages are displayed and saves on the custodial time spent cleaning up and taking down outdated signs.

Case study: Dynamic digital signage hits Nanyang Technological University

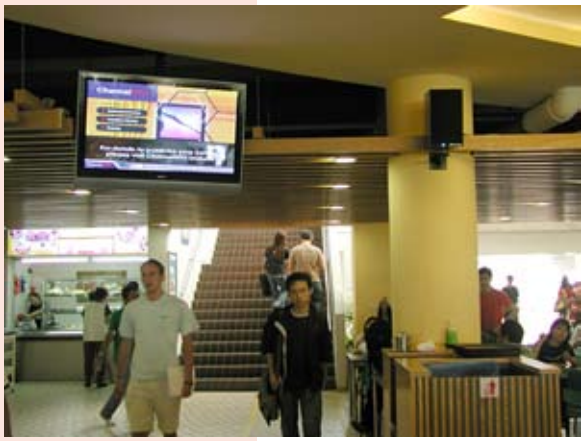
Nanyang Technological University became one of the first educational institutions in Singapore to deploy its own in-house network channel to serve as a dynamic visual communication platform for internal publicity and announcements within the campus.

Implemented in June 2005 and named ChannelNTU, the system is based on the Scala software platform. The network is managed and maintained by a small team of three to four staff members in the Center for Educational Development, or CED.

One staffer oversees the technical deployments, another staffer handles the design and content authoring and another manages the scheduling. A fourth member is expected to join the team to manage the content coordination.

The multimedia content for the channel is developed and managed using Scala Designer, with the software provider's Content Manager scheduling the transmission, which is broadcast to seven plasma screens around the campus. The CED team creates multimedia-rich content that is channeled to the screens in seven high-traffic locations — three screens in the cafeterias, two in the administrative building and the rest placed in the film school and café.

ChannelNTU provides students, staff and visitors with content that includes prime-time news and headlines extracted with RSS-feed technology. The integration with the NewTek Tricaster Pro provides the ability to broadcast live events, such as graduation ceremonies and freshman orientations. Intranet streaming is made possible with the addition of a Windows media encoder that also provides live webcasts of distinguished speakers or visitors and online videos.



NTU deployed its own in-house network channel to serve as a dynamic visual communication platform within the campus.

Student publicity announcements and trailers also are played on ChannelNTU. The channel flourishes as a platform for NTU and student productions to be aired and viewed.

The infrastructure for this solution includes an audio compressor for audio normalization, an FM transmitter to manage noisy locations and a remote software-monitoring client to assess playback. ChannelNTU is controlled and centrally hosted from the CED using fiber networks that connect the

plasma screens throughout the vast campus, which spans about 200 hectares and reaches more than 50 buildings. The channel operates for approximately 11.5 hours per day, Monday through Friday, year-round.

The deployment of the ChannelNTU network was implemented with the help of Click Grafix, a Scala-certified distributor and systems integrator.

Retail

Making money

Ad sales — Particularly for big box stores and other retailers that sell many brands, selling ads on an in-store network is probably the most effective way to achieve a fast ROI for digital signage and begin making profit.

Cross promotion — By taking into consideration the proximity of certain products within a store, digital signage can be used to inform customers about other products that are close by and may relate to the one in which they are interested. For example, messages like “Don’t forget your batteries” work well in a toy store when placed between the products and the batteries themselves. Also, a retailer could promote belts and shoes in the clothing section of a department store to drive sales to other departments.

Further selling through interactivity — Allowing customers to interact with screens at retail has the potential to lock them into new buying opportunities. For example, say a customer is walking through a mall and sees digital signage advertising a new car. The customer can touch the screen to change the colors and get 360-degree views of the vehicle. Then the customer can receive a specifications sheet and contact information for a local dealership on their mobile phone via Bluetooth technology.

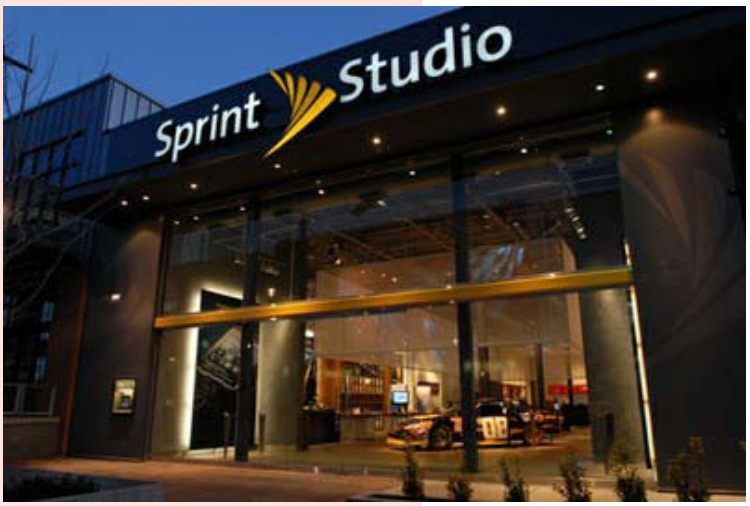
Saving money

Live agents — In a perfect world, a retailer would have one knowledgeable store employee per customer, ready and willing to answer any question that may arise. In today’s world, such a paradigm simply isn’t an option. Retailers such as Staples Business Depot Canada are saving money on staffing by installing live experts available via touchscreen digital signage. Accessible through the Internet, these live help agents are on hand 24/7.

Case Study: Scala partners collaborate on digital signage project for Sprint Studio Store

The Sprint Company, a leader in telecommunications, recently launched the Sprint Studio in Kansas City. Totaling 5,500 square feet, the new facility is a high-tech showcase for the latest in retail design and digital signage technology. Scala Certified Partners Level 5 Media Group, a subsidiary of CTI Solutions; Hammond Communications Group; and IBM collaborated to help Sprint realize its dream of deploying the most revolutionary retail digital signage in the country.

Sprint turned to Level 5 Media Group to help develop a groundbreaking retail digital signage solution. Level 5 took the reigns as the project manager and lead integrator for the Sprint Studio solution and collaborated with Hammond Communications Group, IBM and Scala to take the Studio concept from the drawing board to a working solution in fewer than three months.



Sprint turned to Level 5 Media Group, Hammond Communications and Scala to help develop a groundbreaking retail digital signage solution.

The solution

Visitors to the store are greeted at its concierge station, where they are directed to one of five zones, depending on their specific needs. Each zone is equipped with three to five high-definition LCD monitors featuring content relative to customer queuing and zone-specific messaging. There are a total of 17 high-definition displays throughout the store, and one of the most innovative elements of the system comes during the “Grand Moment.”

During triggered events, which are scheduled to occur randomly around the top of every hour, the digital signage system performs a Grand Moment by lowering the ambient light and audio in the entire store and playing synchronized video, audio and special effects lighting. During a Grand Moment, a single message comprised of 17 videos and five audio sources (one for each zone) is split and synchronized on each of the displays, with the five zones each playing audio relative to their respective parts of the Grand Moment.

Scala programmers took the lead on developing the triggering codes for multiple third-party devices and applications. This included custom triggers for BIAMP lighting servers, Muzak audio controllers and Sprint’s

custom Queue application, as well as the overall Grand Moment triggers that brought them all together. Scala engineers also played a key role in helping Level 5 determine the proper hardware devices needed to operate the network. Extensive testing was required to find devices capable of firing 17 high-definition videos within five playlists at precisely the same time.

The results

Much of the magic behind the Grand Moment can be found in the custom high-definition transcoding, scripting and central Content Management configuration performed by Hammond, the custom programming created by Scala engineers and the third-party triggering device development by Level 5. These items allow the content manager to control not only the media players, but also external environmental control devices, which when used together allow for synchronized audio, video and lighting. The visitor experiences an entire store moment unlike any in the retail environment today.

“This truly is one of the most innovative digital signage deployments in a retail space,” Brian Russell, managing director for Level 5 said. “We are honored to be a part of it and look forward to continuing our partnership with Sprint to help them provide a better experience to their retail customers.”

“We are excited to be a part of this groundbreaking project,” said Dean Reverman, director of business development for Hammond Communication Group. “Digital signage continues to offer retailers unique opportunities for in-store communications and (the) customer experience. Projects like the Sprint Studio confirm the importance of Digital signage for retailers today.”

“It may not sound unique,” Craig Miller, Hammond’s vice president of interactive media, said. “But firing 17 HD videos running within five separate Scala playlists, each being between 4,080 and 6,800 pixels wide per zone, requires a great deal of sophisticated programming. Our customers are demanding more from digital signage than just animated content on a single display. Custom programming, like that performed for Sprint, will be the rule rather than the exception as we move forward.”

“Projects like the Sprint Studio store would not be possible without the innovative industry skills found in the Scala Certified Partner program,” Andrea Waldin, vice president of marketing for Scala, said. “The aggregate skills available throughout the community not only benefit our customers, but are a resource to other members of the community.”

Banking/financial

Making money

Capitalize on a captive audience — Research shows that retail banks are successful in selling previously unknown products using digital signage. One reason digital signage is effective is that dwell times at retail banks are high due to lines that typically are long. This allows for extensive, detailed messaging that educates the customer on the bank's products before he approaches the counter.

Saving money

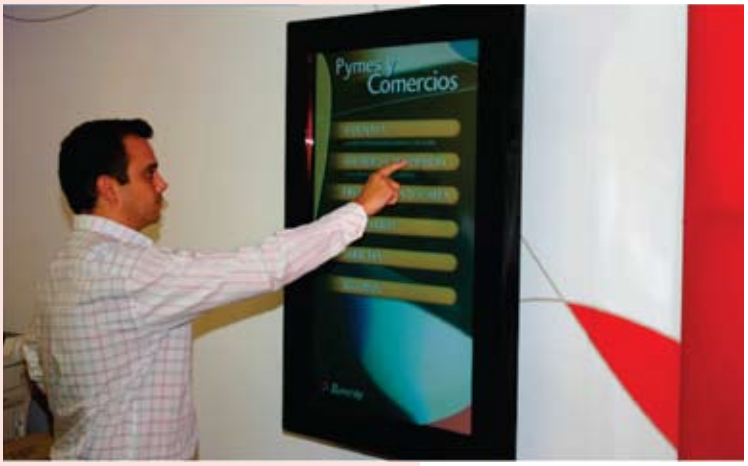
Get the right information, right away — Since the money market is constantly changing, it has a direct effect on the interest rates and prices of certain retail bank products. To print paper signage for these products would be impossible, since numbers would inevitably change by the time the collateral was printed and sent to the branch locations. Digital signage allows these products to be advertised correctly in an instant through the use of the Internet and real-time RSS feeds.

Case study: Spain's Banesto Bank introduces digital signage to its customers

Banesto Bank, Spain's third largest financial institution in volume of managed services, implemented a digital signage network to enhance communication with its customers. Banesto (officially Banco Español de Crédito, S.A.) was founded in 1902 and is currently among the top five financial companies in Spain. With more than 1,700 branches across the country, Banesto Bank serves more than 3,000,000 customers.

Scala Certified Partner AS Video, in collaboration with Telefónica Soluciones, collaborated on the implementation of Banesto Bank's network, Banesto TV, and also provides management and support services.

The critical objective for Banesto Bank's drive to implement digital signage in its branch offices is to enhance the level of customer service and improve communications with its customers.



Spain's Banesto Bank implemented a digital signage network to enhance communication with its customers.

"We advised Banesto about how to implement their critical strategy using the Scala platform," said Javier Menendez, AS Video general sales manager. "With the provided hardware and attention-grabbing content, Banesto Bank can achieve their stated objective to deliver a high level of customer service."

Initially, Banesto TV was introduced in Banesto's main offices in Madrid; the network is comprised of 42-inch plasma touchscreens and a 67-inch rear projection system.

AS Video created dynamic content to capture the attention of Banesto's customers, including product offerings, services, corporate information and RSS feeds with stock market and weather updates. As soon as the screen is touched, customers can choose options from several menus and read information relevant to their needs.

"To keep waiting customers entertained, we have integrated a game into the Banesto TV channel," Menendez said. "Once you win the game, you will see a code on the screen, which has to be sent via your mobile phone, to claim a special prize at the bank. This game also provides the bank the contact details of its customers and enables the institution to fine-tune its marketing activities."

Foodservice

Making money

Upselling at the counter — Several successful digital signage installations offer upsells to customers at the ordering counter. Messages have more of an effect on customers' buying decisions when they are shown at the point-of-decision.

Saving money

Dayparting — Digital menu boards allow for instant dayparting of menus, which means less employee time is spent changing or rotating light-board menus.

Instant menu updates — Instant updates from a centrally managed location mean paper signage and light-board slides don't have to be shipped to each restaurant location, saving money on both shipping costs and employee time spent changing the signage.

Case study: McDonald's introduces digital flavor at its restaurants in the Philippines

McDonald's patrons in the Philippines now enjoy a new taste at the chain's outlets — the taste of dynamic digital signage powered by Scala.

Implemented and managed by Globaltronics Inc., a provider of digital-media management services and systems, the McDonald's digital signage network sought to enhance the store experience and strengthen the chain's branding exercise by keeping customers informed, entertained and educated with visually rich content. The signage network also was meant to enhance the customer shopping experience and ensure a focused message is delivered to its intended audience.

The network runs in most McDonald's outlets spanning the Philippines archipelago, from metro Manila to Cebu and Davao City.

The McDonald's digital signage network sought to enhance the store experience and strengthen the chain's branding.

Most of the deployment locations are equipped with a 42-inch plasma screen positioned at or near the stores' counter and driven by one Scala Player. Several locations have two screens installed. The digital content for all locations is developed and managed by Globaltronics and remotely controlled from the company's Network Operations Center, or NOC. The content is updated twice per week — or as often as necessary — for the entire network, selected outlets or even individual outlets.

The media-rich content includes McDonald's marketing and product collateral, product promotions, video commercials and special announcements. Further revenue is generated from the sales of advertising space to the chain's business partners, as well as third-party advertisers.

The management and control of the digital signage network is supported by an infrastructure comprising a proxy server installed at the main server that is used to distribute the content on the McDonald's WAN system. A VPN connection links the Globaltronics NOC with the proxy server at the McDonald's headquarters.

Transportation

Making money

Sell ads for screens in terminals and baggage claims — Many travelers arriving to airports via landing flights need to rent cars, find hotels or grab a bite to eat immediately, and the roster of potential advertisers looking to reach that group is long. Digital signage deployers can bridge that gap by selling such ads on screens located in or on the way to baggage claim areas.

The out-of-towners — Another opportunity is to sell ads to out-of-town advertisers for screens in departure terminals. For example, if a gate often has flights leaving for Las Vegas, then perhaps some of that city's hotels and attractions would be interested in reaching those travelers before they even touch down.

Saving money

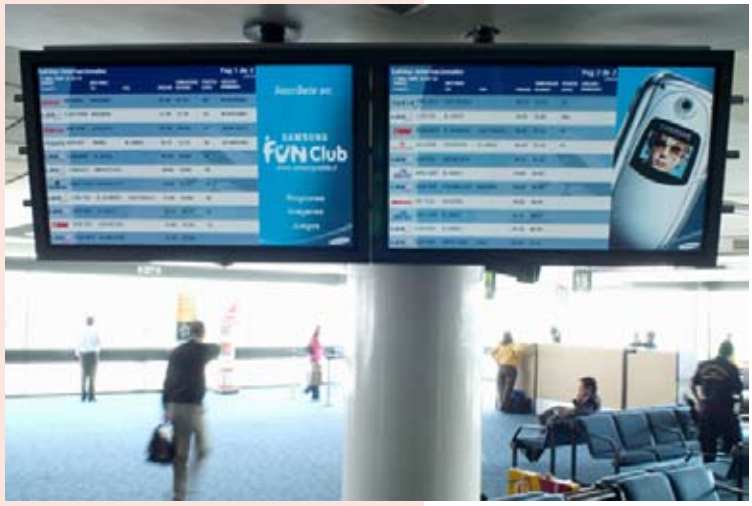
Faster, greener updates — When there are expected delays on train routes, the stations usually print signs to alert customers. On certain occasions, they may even print and distribute handbills with updated train schedules. Converting these signs to digital not only reduces the amount of printing costs, but also allows real-time updates from one computer, rather than individually by station.

Case study: Scala powers transportation digital signage at Santiago International Airport

Santiago International Airport deployed a large digital signage network using Scala software that offers those passing through the airport critical flight information combined with advertising via multiple channels and a video wall. ViewMax, a Chile-based Scala Certified Partner, designed, installed and operates this large network. Being the main airport in Chile, Santiago sees more than 7 million passengers each year, 60 percent of whom travel internationally. The airport has 115 service counters in its 90,000-square meter facility and was chosen as the best regional airport by Asociación Internacional de Transporte Aéreo Latinoamericano, or AITAL.

The airport decided that digital signage was what it needed to improve passengers' service experiences, modernize its infrastructure and obtain advertising income. Santiago chose to leverage the combined expertise of Scala and ViewMax and the sales and marketing expertise of Massiva to make the project successful.

A total of 281 42-inch Samsung plasma screens were deployed throughout the airport and feature six information channels: counter assignments, counters, boarding, baggage claim, arrivals and departure information and pure advertising. In addition, two video walls comprised of four-by-four plasmas were installed in strategic locations for advertising and public announcements.



Santiago International Airport deployed a large digital signage network using Scala software, offering airline passengers critical flight information.

"The main challenge of the project was to improve the quality, visibility and design of the information provided to passengers and to generate revenue for the concessionary." Antionio Smith de Aguirre, commercial manager for the airport, said. "After two years, our evaluation, as well as that of the passengers, has been very positive. We are very satisfied with the project."

Mauricio Carrasco, general manager for network operator View-Max, echoed those accolades. "We are very pleased with the evolution of this complex digital signage project," he said. "The technology has proven to be robust and flexible, and we are experiencing a sustained growth in advertising revenues, showing the maturity of the new media. We are quite confident that at the bottom of all this, working closely with our partners at the Santiago Airport, we have developed a strong business model that really improves the customer experience of passengers, who were the focus of the project."

Hospitality

Making money

Promote amenities — These days, hotels seem have everything under one roof, though patrons may not be aware of all the amenities. Digital signage gives hotels the ability to bring awareness to other money-makers in the building such as restaurants, gift shops, wireless internet and spas.

Advertise local attractions — Once a digital signage network is installed in a hotel, the establishment can reach out to local tourist attractions and sell ad space on that network. Like a modern-day version of the brochure stand, digital screens can draw in ad dollars from restaurants and local attractions looking to attract hotel clientele.

Saving money

Clean up conference centers — Hotel conference centers can host thousands of events a year, each one requiring some sort of signage. Particularly if there is more than one conference occurring simultaneously, unattractive easel frames can crop up in lobby areas. Using digital signage for room identification and scheduling can save thousands of dollars per year in printing costs and make conference areas look more attractive.

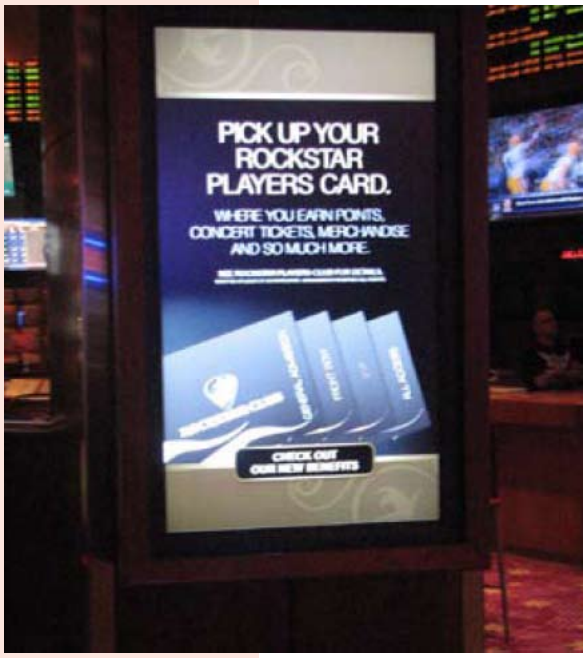
Integrate with event-management software — Most digital signage software platforms for hospitality now can integrate with Delphi or other event-management software. This allows hotels to leverage all of their tech assets together to provide automatic updates for room and conference scheduling.

Case study: Hard Rock Hotel and Casino deploys Scala network during renovation

Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas is a boutique resort casino geared to the tastes of music lovers — mostly rock 'n' roll lovers — of all ages. Currently, the casino is a mid-size complex on a 16.7 acre site with some 700 hotel rooms, a moderately sized casino floor, dining venues and a famous pool with its Sunday "Rehab" for overzealous Saturday night partiers. The Tahitian-style beach and swimming pool was selected by the Travel Channel as one of "The Top 10 Pools" in the world.

The hotel and casino wanted to replace an older system that transmitted video over RF with one that had more versatile software features, transporting video over Cat5 for better resolution and the capability to develop dynamic content.

The hotel and casino also were undergoing a $750 million renovation, so the system needed to be completely scalable and adaptable for features such as split screens, crawl messages, insertion of video cameras from the resort's world-renowned pool, insertion of META data and flexible scheduling. The requirements also stipulated that the system was to be accessible via an Internet browser both from the office and remotely. However, the major objective was to add to the customers' entertainment experience



The Hard Rock Hotel and Casino was in the midst of a complete renovation and needed its digital signage system to be completely scalable.

and create an overall branding face lift with the use of exciting, dynamic messaging that was easy to update.

The solution

The installation of of a digital signage network at the Hard Rock facility was complicated, since screens needed to play content 24/7. The initial deployment of nine player channels and the Content Manager and Designer was phased in over a four-day period. After a few months of operation, two additional channels were installed.

The network was composed of Dell Optiplex 745 media players and Samsung 40-inch LCD screens running over a standard IP network. The media players and the content-management server were preinstalled by Core Technology Inc. prior to the installation of the screens, making the on-site deployment of the entire network a plug-and-play operation and saving potential delays and confusion. To facilitate maintenance and monitoring, the system was set up with remote access using an Internet browser.

Overall, 11 media channels were deployed, including at the outdoor Marquee, at The Joint (a music venue) and at the front desk, as well as retail, nightclub and box-office locations.

The results

The Hard Rock Hotel and Casino and its parent company, Morgans Hotel Group, were quite pleased with the smooth transition to Scala's digital signage network and the performance of the Scala software. The visual image of the property has been materially enhanced.

"Working closely with our client to define the goals and requirements of the network prior to any installation work helped make the project go smoothly with very little down time," Jerry Werner, of Core Technology Inc, said.

Corporate Communications

Making money

Advertising to employees — In addition to corporate messaging, leftover space on digital screens in corporate locations can be sold to local restaurants or business that employees are likely to use, such as dry cleaners. Particularly if it is deployed at a large company or corporate campus, digital signage can prove to be valuable real-estate for advertisers.

Saving money

Training sessions — Hosting after-hours training sessions via a digital signage network means that a company can avoid the travel costs of sending employees off-site for job training.

Cutting back on paper communication — Despite green initiatives and e-mail, corporate society still uses more paper than ever before. A corporate digital communications system reduces the amount of printed corporate communications, saving on paper and distribution costs.

Case study: Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corp. communicates with employees using Scala digital signage

Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation, or NPC, in conjunction with Scala Certified Partner Advanced AV, implemented a digital signage network to connect the 15 buildings of the 200 acre Novartis campus in East Hanover, N.J.

The network, running over the Novartis local IP infrastructure, informs employees of company news, events and benefits developments. Prior to implementing the digital communications network, Novartis' internal communications team used foam-core posters, distributing them throughout the corporate campus. With such a system, changing messages became difficult and expensive. Additionally, employees grew to ignore the signage because it was seldom relevant to the issues of the day.

Novartis' solution to these issues was a digital signage network conceived through collaboration between NPC Communications and Advanced AV, a long-time supplier to NPC. The goal was to develop a corporate network that provided real-time communications between the company and its employees while increasing employee awareness of current company events. Novartis also was looking for a more cost-effective solution.

The Novartis digital signage network is composed of 18 40-inch Mitsubishi LCD screens located in building lobbies, cafeterias and break rooms. The network took approximately 6 months to implement, including the development of relevant content (which consists of one-minute to 90-second message loop cycles), implementation of I.T. protocols and the installation of screens. Advanced AV performed the initial implementation work for Novartis.

While evaluating the effectiveness of the network, the communications team concluded the messages must be relevant to the employee community. Corporate news and business issues were not enough to pique the interest of employees, so the messages needed to be focused on their daily concerns.

"The implementation of our network represented a significant cost reduction and provided Novartis with the ability to communicate with our employee community on a real-time basis," Jim Morgenland, of Novartis, said. "Upon implementation of the network, the cost of designing and printing signs was reduced by 90 percent. Additionally the cost of distributing and disposing of posters was eliminated."

The network was conceived and managed using Scala's software suite. Scala provides a platform to develop customized message content relevant to a specific location and audience, as well as the capability to integrate corporate news and business issues and provide a real-time employee message board over the network.

Feedback from employees and corporate management alike has been overwhelmingly positive. Initially, employees were somewhat apprehensive about the effectiveness of the network, considering the company's history of using foam-core posters. Now, they look forward to receiving the "news of the day" via the digital signs.

To further enhance communications, Novartis has plans to connect its Suffern, N.Y. manufacturing facility to the digital signage network. Linking the Suffern facility to the corporate network will provide Novartis the opportunity relay real-time messages to all employees, regardless of their location, connecting associates throughout the organization to the corporate culture.

Further growth of the network includes incorporation of an additional 10 buildings throughout the Novartis campus.