



Port Columbus Int'l Adds Giant Video Wall

By Nicole Nelson



COLUMBUS REGIONAL
AIRPORT AUTHORITY

factsfigures

- Project:** Video Wall Installation
- Location:** Port Columbus (OH) Int'l Airport
- Airport Authority:** Columbus Regional Airport Authority
- Cost:** \$1.2 million
- Size:** 40.5 ft wide, 7.6 ft tall
- Adjacent Duo FIDS:** 10.1 ft. wide, 7.6 ft. tall
- Scope:** 72 screens over a three-area matrix
- Monitors:** NEC
- Screen Size:** 46 inches
- Content Provider:** Com-Net
- Third-party Advertising:** Clear Channel



"Broad and High" not only describes the new \$1.2 million video wall at Port Columbus International Airport (CMH); it also refers to the historic downtown cross streets that served as an inspiration for the airport's banner information technology offering.

Much as the major intersection of Broad and High is adorned with an array of lighted, strolling digital ticker tapes, CMH's sophisticated system of hardware and software creates a vibrant and exciting visual at the airport.

When CMH officials discussed their big ideas with Com-Net at a trade show in 2009, designers literally began scratching out ideas on a napkin. The airport wanted control over the layout and the ability to run live television, advertising and a news ticker just like the busy Port Columbus street corner, recalls Mark Mayfield, director of sales and marketing with Com-Net.

"Broad and High has a Times Square feel, and they wanted to bring that feel into the airport," explains Mayfield.

The new system replaces a video wall Com-Net installed at the airport in 2003. The 8-year-old matrix of 7-foot-by-3-foot rear-projection monitors by Clarity contained discontinued equipment that had dimmed over time.

"It was hard to read, we couldn't get parts and it was hard to maintain," relates Mark Mulchaey, manager of customer service and general aviation business development for the Columbus Regional Airport Authority (CRAA). It was simply beyond the end of its life, he adds.

David W. Saleme, CRAA's concessions manager, notes that the original projection-based video wall included both flight information and a lucrative advertising queue.

"Early in its life cycle, it generated decent advertising revenue," Saleme recalls. "But once the quality started to fade, the advertising revenue went away, and it was hard to read the flight information."

Shawn Prince, CRAA's technology manager who initiated the original project and oversaw the technical coordination of its implementation, says the readability problem was fixed when the airport jumped from a projection display matrix of 21 40-inch screens to what is now a total of 72 46-inch screens over a three-area matrix.

Per CRAA's vision, the video wall can perform multiple functions that Com-Net oversees as the provider of the flight information display system and the data that flows through it. In addition to providing eye-catching in-house artwork and media development, Clear Channel serves as CRAA's third-party



advertising agent, selling time and space to clients who want exposure at the airport. CRAA establishes the rates.

"Columbus is an airport leader that has provided us with the opportunity to step outside the box," says Jon Abeln, vice president of business development at Clear Channel Airports.

The ultra-thin bezel screens in a seamless display matrix provide advertisers with a medium that is visually "very appealing," Abeln adds.

In addition to the sizable screen matrix on the wall, additional visual appeal is added with LED lights behind the screens that can be changed to any color. The backwash effect is changed to complement various messaging.

Beyond Ads & Flight Info

The airport "pressed hard" to ensure that the system would provide more than a lucrative commercial messaging medium, recalls Prince.

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Down & Low

In addition to installing a tall new video wall, Port Columbus International Airport is also upgrading its information technology in smaller, lower spaces by adding more power outlets for customer use.

The new AC power sources will be located where the passengers are: near holdrooms and directly on holdroom seating, explains David W. Saleme, concessions manager for the Columbus Regional Airport Authority.

During the first phase of the upgrade project, which was completed in 2010, crews installed more than 400 inPower Flex outlets from Arconas directly onto existing holdroom seating. Cost for the initial phase was covered by a concessionaire marketing fund anchored by HMSHost and The Paradies Shops.

"The objective of providing this level of service to our passengers is simple," says Saleme. "With the increasing demand of the devices they carry and the growing number of flights with Wi-Fi available, we wanted to make sure our passengers' charging needs were fully met. At Columbus, passengers won't need to crawl around and hunt or hoard power outlets."

Approximately 1,400 more outlets, including those at additional workstations, will be installed before the project is complete, reports Lynn Gordon, vice president of airport solutions for Arconas.



"We made sure this system was flexible and could adapt to different types of things," he notes. On the 10th anniversary of 9/11, for instance, the airport opted to reduce the size of its ads so it could also broadcast a live television feed of tribute events.

"We have the capability to put our flight information in the middle and use the sides for ads, or move things around however we want," explains Prince. "Whether it is advertising, marketing for our concessions or some type of public service messaging, the wall is more than just a medium to push a commercial message."

Contracts with advertisers include riders that allow CMH to use the wall for special or unexpected events, notes Saleme.

"If we have a weather event, and we want to show how the weather is impacting flights, we could put the data on the screen," he explains. "Anything we can do to increase the visibility and usefulness of the wall is good for the authority and our partners."

ROI Check

According to Mulchaey, CRAA doesn't expect to "break even" on the \$1.2 million system for at least four years. But the video wall project wasn't just about recouping the purchase price, he adds. Elevating the customer experience was also an important factor.

"Despite the fact that it was a pretty steep price tag, we felt it was worth it," Mulchaey explains. "It is a great platform to inform our passengers of the shopping, dining and service opportunities available in the terminal. We have information about free Wi-Fi; it promotes our parking; it promotes customer service ... so many more opportunities that are open and available to us beyond just the strict payback on the investment."

The primary driver for the project, however, was making flight information readily available and easily noticeable for passengers, specifies Prince.

"That has definitely proven itself a success," he summarizes. "It is almost like a landmark or icon passengers can see from everywhere in the main lobby."

To see footage of CMH's new video wall, visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oy-dDneYoVA.



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