V television station transforms its studio into a touchless viewing experience with NEC video walls

Quick Facts
Facility: V television station
Location: Montreal, Québec, Canada
Challenge: Building and integrating near-seamless, touchless video walls into live-broadcast television studio
Solution: 46” NEC X461UN
Date: August 2009

As a new television station, Québec-based V Télé wanted to offer dynamic and original programming that would appeal to its core audience—young viewers aged 18 to 49 years old. V programs emphasize entertainment and attempt to satisfy viewers’ guilty pleasures, such as reality shows. V wanted to have an interactive relationship with its viewers and entertain them with the content being presented. To effectively accomplish this task, it turned to integrator Simbioz to install an innovative solution that would spark viewers’ interests and maintain their attention for the long haul.

The Challenge
In June 2009, the desire to be cutting-edge kept V on the lookout for new ways to broadcast to its audience. Particularly, it needed a fresh, dynamic look onscreen for two of its new daily programs, premiering at the end of August 2009. V needed to quickly find a solution that would be easily integrated into its recently created TV studio.

In its search for an LCD display, V wanted outstanding, high-definition image quality, the smallest bezel it could find and a commercial-grade product that could withstand extended usage. The station also tried retro-projection systems on a variety of surfaces but was not happy with the result.

“It was important for us to ensure that the televisual quality of different display technologies was consistent with the television broadcaster’s expectations,” said François Birtz, general manager of operations at V. “We liked the Simbioz system we had seen prior to our project and decided to do tests with their FT-57 system, an interactive 57” NEC MultiSync LCD5710 with landscape stand that enables a touchless display experience.”

The Solution
After weeks of testing, Birtz agreed the system was compatible with the studio’s technology, and realized that working with their products would be the most beneficial for the studio, as their systems are created specifically for the broadcast television market. Simple implementation was necessary given the short amount of time V had to finish the project.

Knowing V was intent on having a large display surface, Simbioz offered NEC’s 46” MultiSync X461UN screens due to the ease of creating multiple configuration options. V was pleased with the displays’ impressive visual quality and near-seamless bezel, so it purchased 14 units. The screens were positioned for three separate in-studio configurations. Two were built in a 2x2 matrix that blend into the décor surrounding the onscreen anchors to give its television studio a more dynamic and interactive appeal for viewers, V installed “touchless” video walls using NEC’s X461UN displays. A 3x2 (at right) and 2x2 configuration (center behind desk) lend broadcasts a unique advantage.
and serve to present videos and images during programs.

A 3x2 configuration integrates “touchless” interactive technology by Simbioz. In order to make the X461UN matrices touchless, two cameras are positioned in the upper corner at opposite ends of the screen. With a simple gesture, the television host can control the interactive content by selecting, moving and opening windows to present various reports and two-way interviews.

The air-tight interface between the Simbioz TV system and the Spyder video processor by Vista Systems allows the user to simply move his or her hands to make interactive videos stemming from broadcast-type signals. Depending on the capacity of the Spyder video processor, the user can also pre-determine presentation and layout models for the interactive windows manipulated and displayed onscreen.

The Simbioz interactive system can be adapted to any type of program and is fully compatible with video signals from V’s control room. Ambitious users can even have several Simbioz interactive walls communicate with one another from inside the same studio.

To deal with contingencies that may arise during live broadcasts and support the in-studio host, Simbioz provided a controllable console that is installed in V’s control room, making it possible to use different modes of interaction. The presentation modes give control room technicians the flexibility to choose the position of the Spyder windows on the interactive video wall. The control room switcher can also select the position and order of the to interact with web content extends our onscreen content capabilities, as it enables our anchors to call up a website, YouTube video or map location on the NEC video walls, further enhancing the on-air segment.*

After finding a display manufacturer, V needed to secure the screens in a stable location. The station’s studio designer worked closely with Simbioz to build a well-concealed structure that would give the audience the impression that the screens are suspended in mid-air. This proved to be a difficult feat considering V was leaning towards installing video walls that measured 10 by 4 feet.

“This customized solution gives broadcasters a new means of presenting content in a manner that is flexible and offers all of the required durability,” said Étienne F. Carrier, vice president of sales and marketing at Simbioz. “The NEC X461UN screens offer an impressive range of display configurations, which worked to our favor in this limited-spatial environment. Using the animated, interactive video walls on-air will revolutionize television and greatly impact all audiences that lay eyes on it, no matter the newsworthy topic.”