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NEC

Wharton School gets smart with NEC large screen displays and video walls

Facility:
• Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania

Vertical:
• Higher Education

Location:
• Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Challenges:
• Upgrade existing video wall in the same size parameters with significant brightness

Solution:
• 46" NEC X463UN and 55" X551S

Result:
• Technology that fit into the existing environment and could handle content from a variety of sources

Date:
• October 2012

Founded in 1881 as the first collegiate business school, the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania is recognized globally for intellectual leadership and ongoing innovation across every major discipline of business education. With a broad global community and one of the most published business school faculties, Wharton creates ongoing economic and social value around the world. The school has 5,000 undergraduate, MBA, executive MBA and doctoral students; more than 9,000 annual participants in executive education programs; and a powerful alumni network of 91,000 graduates.

Philadelphia-based Video Visions designs, sells, installs and services single and multiscreen presentation systems for professional applications. Video Visions prides itself on being a boutique professional audio visual company, specializing in video walls and large screen displays. The company's sales, engineering and technical staff have undergone training with product manufacturers. Video Vision's installation crews are familiar with all aspects of video wall or large screen display installs, working with the architects for all pre-install support, providing custom stands and wall brackets, product installation and after-install product servicing. The company's team of experts has more than 100 combined years of professional audio visual experience.

The Challenge

As the newest and biggest building at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, Jon M. Huntsman Hall is the center of Wharton's culture, bringing together learning, community, teamwork and innovation. The design of the building — from its cutting-edge technology to new classroom designs — is tailored to Wharton's innovative curriculum and interactive learning methods. The building boasts 324,000 square feet, 48 classrooms, 57 group study rooms, lecture halls, auditoriums and conference rooms.

A colloquium located on the building's eighth floor incorporated a video wall, but at five years old, it was time for an upgrade. The room, at 90 feet wide and 30 feet deep, can host as many as 150 people and is used most often as a social gathering space, as well as for hosting presentations, dinners and conferences.

Upgrading the existing video wall incorporated a number of challenges. First, the room is finished in wood panels that could not be modified, so it was important for the new wall to fit seamlessly in the existing space.

"We were working within specific size parameters to fit an existing enclosure from an older video wall that we were removing from the location," said Vincent DiStasio, vice president of Video Visions. "We wanted to accomplish the job with minimal retrofitting to the beautiful woodwork in the room."

Second, the room overlooked the city of Philadelphia and users often wanted to leave the shades open, particularly in the evening when the sun sets over west Philadelphia. Whatever screens were installed, in turn, needed to be able to perform in a variety of lighting situations.

Third, the university, as is every educational institution today, was operating with a strict budget, so it needed to get the maximum impact for its investment.

The Solution

The Wharton School has partnered with Video Visions on a number of audio visual installations on campus. In addition, the school already used displays from NEC Display Solutions in 57 group study rooms in Huntsman Hall.

"We really consider Video Visions and NEC our partners in this," said Marko Jarymovych, IT technical director, public technology with the Wharton School. "We also use large screen NEC displays at our campus in San Francisco. We've always been happy with their products and support."

For the new video wall, Video Visions used 46-inch NEC X463UN displays mounted on push/pull brackets in a 4 x 3 configuration. The wall is supplemented by two 55-inch NEC X551S displays on carts to accommodate the width of the room. Content is controlled by a Crestron DM video processor.

"We thoroughly enjoy working with NEC and chose to lead with their product line due to the fact that they have a wonderful sales and technical team that backs up their product lines," DiStasio said. "As the integrator, we always know that when working with NEC, we will get the product support that both we and the client need."

The ultra-narrow bezel and wide viewing angle of the X463UN displays make them ideal for video wall installations. The 700 cd/m^2 maximum brightness and direct white LED backlighting make them ideal for any lighting situation.

"Obviously these are decisions that are not trivial, and we wanted to make the best choice possible," Jarymovych said. "On a relative scale we didn't spend a large sum of money, but on a project like this we live with the decision for years."

The screens were able to function with the existing wiring, eliminating the expense of changing out that wiring. In addition, the screens can handle content from a variety of sources, including laptops and tablet computers.

Working with Video Visions and NEC was key to making the project a success, Jarymovych said.

"Video Visions really helped us in terms of product selection and handling the logistics of the installation and implementation," Jarymovych said. "For me, this is where a partnership with someone like Video Visions, and in turn leveraging their partnership with NEC, is really helpful," he said. "I'm managing a whole portfolio of projects, so the fewer technical details I have to be involved in and the fewer field decisions I have to make, the more efficient I can be with my time in dealing with other issues. To me, that's the real value in that partnership."

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