



Passenger Information Display and Digital Signage Controller

Background

An airport is the perfect forum for the growing digital signage market. It already has the display real estate, a natural mix of infotainment style content and an expanding retail base. In 2005, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) published statistics to show that Newcastle International Airport was the fastest growing of the ten largest regional UK airports in 2004.

This growth supports a new £7 million terminal development, creating an additional 3,000 square metres of space in the departure lounge with a view to further augmenting the existing retail portfolio. In partnership with Fujitsu and Densitron Ferrograph, Blue Chip Technology have delivered an installation of Vario + dedicated display controllers. In addition, to updating the delivery and quality of flight information, these Pentium® 4 powered engines open wide the commercial opportunities of digital signage.

System Requirements

Newcastle Airport had a legacy installation of 28" CRTs powered by Pentium II motherboards. Now reaching the end of their useful life, display downtime was becoming unacceptable. Problems included hard drive failure, power supply burn out and screen shrinkages. One section of check in desks was subject to direct sunlight making it very difficult to see flight information.



Legacy CRT System

Within the airport complex, Health and Safety issues are paramount. Every time a flight information display goes down, someone has to physically go up a ladder to sort it out. Consequently, the immediate area needs to be cordoned off and check - in desks re-allocated to accommodate the disruption. This can put some pressure on everyone concerned – IT Maintenance, Customer Services and the airlines alike.

Already aware of the various technologies, Newcastle attended a trade show and entered a dialogue with Fujitsu - one of the key display manufacturers Blue Chip Technology partner with in delivering digital signage solutions. In this instance, a combination of a 32" LCD and the Vario + controller was under



consideration. The installation project plan incorporated three phases, incorporating a total of fifty units to replace the existing CRT's, populate the new terminal and augment the passenger lounge.

The Vario family of dedicated wide-screen controllers incorporate Pentium® 4 CPU performance and a memory capacity of up to 2GB, making them ideal for handling hi-end content. The Vario + model includes AGP/PCI expansion and a CD, CD RW or DVD drive bay. The unobtrusive W425 x H66mm x D245mm chassis is designed to operate 24/7, equipped with three divisional cooling compartments, the unit has an operating temperature of 5°C to 40°C.

The hard drive is ruggedised and designed to allow the Vario unit to be mounted at any angle without putting undue stress on the drive bearings. In the event of a power failure, the Vario + can be set up to power up in standby mode or return to whatever status it was in operation before the power downtime – another little feature which means less time being wasted up ladders.

Conclusion

Historically, Newcastle predominantly used their display real estate for straight passenger information interspersed with static adverts for the airport retail outlets. This set up was fairly inflexible and therefore not subject to regular updates. As well as improved image quality and reliability in flight information display, the new installation can deliver all the value added capabilities of a digital signage solution. Hi resolution, dynamic, scheduled, trackable display airtime – a very attractive proposition for the airport retail sector.