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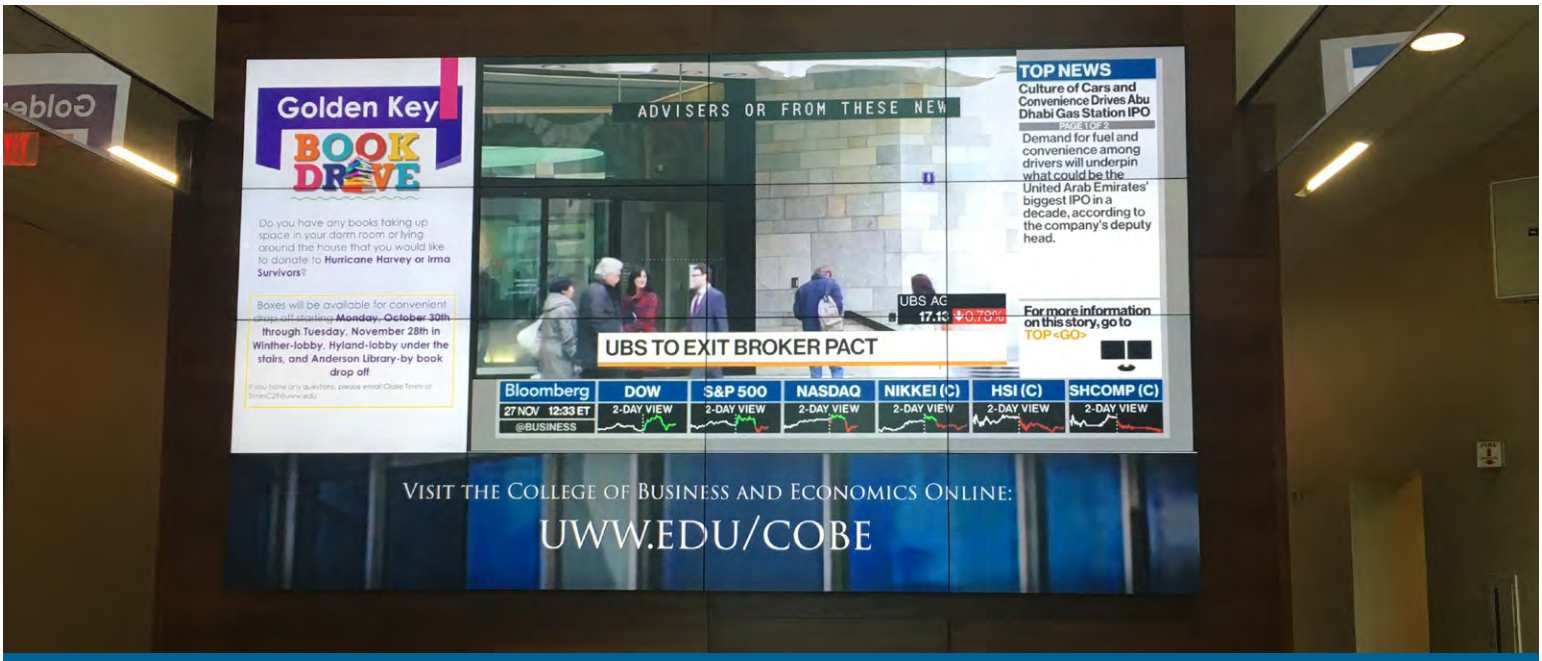

University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Upgrades to Sharp Video Wall

When the video wall in Timothy J. Hyland Hall's atrium needed an upgrade, a new wall made from Sharp monitors was installed in less than a week. It proved to be not only bigger and brighter than the previous design, but also able to display clearly despite the ambient light in the atrium.

Business Environment Challenges

New Englanders who settled in Whitewater, WI in the early 19th century brought with them many of their values including a passion for education. Today, the academic tradition persists at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater (UW-Whitewater) as it offers more than 50 undergraduate majors, 14 graduate programs and a doctoral degree, with more than 1,000 courses for its 12,000+ students.

The College of Business and Economics is the largest and newest academic building on campus. The focal point of the building is the atrium with a video wall designed as a communications hub. However, after nine years of use, the monitors began showing signs of aging, and the school was becoming concerned about reliability as some began to randomly fail and had to be replaced. The way the video wall was set up, if one screen went down, the entire system needed to be shut off, causing downtime.

After the school's supply of spare monitors became depleted, UW-Whitewater needed an immediate, reliable solution that wouldn't get in the way of the school's schedule. A project plan was created to have a new video wall installed during spring break while classes were not in session.

Industry
Education

Organization
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

Challenges
- Aging monitors caused the video wall to be out of service for long stretches of time.
- Needed to replace an entire video wall during the week of spring break

Solutions
- 16 Sharp 55" Class (54.6" diagonal) PN-V551 professional LED monitors in a 4x4 configuration
- Brightness of 700 cd/m2 shined through ambient lighting of the atrium
- A variety of third-party solutions gave the school flexibility in content

Results
- Bigger, brighter video wall
- Better picture through slimmer bezels
- User-friendly content creation from students and faculty members can be shown on the wall

Technology Solutions

Local Pro AV integrator Camera Corner Connecting Point (CCCP) was contracted to construct a new video wall within the week-long break. The company suggested using Sharp monitors due to previous experiences.

"We showed the Sharp devices because in the past they have proven to be very reliable," said Scott Tomashek, Director – AV Design Engineering. "Also, their warranty is wonderful."

CCCP successfully removed the former video wall and installed the new one within the week-long break. The company built the new system out of 16 Sharp 55" Class (54.6" diagonal) PN-V551 professional LED monitors in a 4x4 configuration. In comparison, the 16 former screens were each 46" diagonal. With full-HD (1,920 x 1,080-pixel) resolution and a brightness of 700 cd/m2, the new monitors are bigger and brighter. They also offer exceptionally thin 3.5 mm* ultra-slim bezels.

In addition, CCCP used third-party solutions to give Sharp monitors additional capabilities. For example, a Crestron-powered control system and video switcher give users easy access to adding content and switching screens. Because the atrium is four stories high, sound needed to fill the space as well, so an audio controller was also installed. Microphones are also connected into that system, so if anyone is holding an event in the atrium, the school can show presentations and use the microphone to let everyone in the room hear the speaker clearly. In addition, content from Rise Vision gets piped into the Crestron switching system and then gets sent out to the screens.

* 3.5 mm is the minimum combined frame width for neighboring monitors, excluding the gap between the monitors.

Proven results

"Many school faculty members commented on the difference between the old monitors and new ones," UW-Whitewater Technology Specialist Adam Lynch said.

"There were many people who noticed that the screens were bigger and the bezels were smaller," he said. "It is significantly brighter than our old video wall. We didn't realize how dim our monitors were getting until we put on the new ones. Our old monitors were 720-pixel resolution. These new ones are full-HD (1920 x 1080-pixel) resolution. The PN-V551 monitors proved to be bright enough to handle the ambient lighting shining through four stories of glass windows in the atrium."

UW-Whitewater received not just a newer, bigger, brighter video wall, but also upgrades in connectivity that are easy to control and allow the university more flexibility in presentations.

"The Crestron Control System makes it simple to control the monitors because they are all linked together, so there is only one serial command that we're sending out to control all of them," Lynch said. "The setup is extremely easy and that has worked very well for us."

For content, the university typically runs business and economic related news throughout the week. Since the stock market is closed on the weekends, the screens often run sports programming during that time.

The type of content displayed is nearly limitless. The monitors can show one image across all screens or designated monitors can show other content. A media player typically runs academic-related advertising on the far left screens. The campus has a pool where people can submit items related to the College of Business and Economics on those left-side screens. The bottom screens have been used as welcome messages for guests, among other content.

During graduation ceremonies, the building serves as an overflow area. Attendees with small children can view the ceremonies on the video wall in the atrium if the children become restless in the adjacent auditorium.

But one of the greatest advantages of the video wall setup is how easy it is for students and faculty members to add their own content to the screens.

"We have a computer sitting in the back control room where any students or faculty members can request access," Lynch said. "They can load up their own PowerPoint® presentations, videos or other content that can be displayed across all screens. We have a system that lets us control and switch between any content we want."

Watch a video of the Sharp video wall being installed at UW-Whitewater >>

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