

Ingram Micro Showcases Digital Signage Expertise with NEC Displays and VS Networks



Quick Facts

Facility

- Ingram Micro

Location

- Buffalo, NY

Challenges

- Communicating corporate messaging to employees across large campus.

Solution

- 55" NEC V552; 55" X552UN; and 65" V652, VS Networks Content Creation and Content Management System

Date

- October 2014

When it's your business to bring the latest technology to global companies, you have to walk the walk in your own facilities.

Ingram Micro is one of the world's largest technology solutions providers, representing 1,400 suppliers and serving more than 200,000 customers. It used digital signage at its Buffalo campus for years to communicate corporate messages, educate sales reps on new offerings and promotions, and add visual interest to public areas.

The only catch: The displays came from a patchwork of vendors, so there was neither a unified look nor a cohesive method for pushing out content to every screen. "There was no single point of ownership in the organization," said Kevin Prewett, Ingram Micro's senior director of vendor management.

The Challenge

Customers assumed the team that manages Ingram Micro's professional AV business also supplied the digital signage throughout the Buffalo campus. Until recently, that wasn't the case.

The new signage needed to showcase the high-quality installations Ingram Micro provides its customers. It had to consistently and reliably display images around the clock in various locations and lighting conditions throughout the campus, including the public lobby, private employee entrance, lunchrooms and open office areas.

"On our end, it was all about having a display manufacturer who consistently delivered a minimum failure rate," said Cary Goldman, Vice President of Sales at VS Networks, which provided the media players content management system and partnered with Ingram to provide content. "We needed to ensure we were at 100 percent, 365 days a year."

Ingram Micro wanted to be able to centrally push out content, such as global marketing or HR messaging from corporate headquarters. At the same time, it wanted to give managers localized control to program messages to individual areas, such as a congratulatory note when a representative made a large sale. Vendors also regularly share promotions and contests with salespeople through the signage, so Ingram Micro wanted a streamlined way for ads to load and route through the approval process.

"We wanted to be sure we brought an entire solution together," Prewett said. "We had to be confident the operation would be solid."

The Solution

Ingram Micro selected NEC Display Solutions as the provider for the digital signage after experiencing years of superior results with its clients.

“NEC has always been a great partner for Ingram Micro,” Prewett said. “They’re very proactive. They hear us talking about doing something and jump right in. It wasn’t just about a product. It was about a solution.”

A total of three video walls were mounted in the main lobby and employee entrance using 55-inch NEC X551UN screens in a 2x2 configuration. Four 65-inch NEC V652 displays were also placed in public areas. And 38 55-inch NEC V552 digital signs were installed throughout the Buffalo campus.

After years of working with NEC, Ingram Micro knew its displays had the quality and reliability so crucial to this project. Content can be pushed out campus-wide or tailored to specific zones. The signs display a rich, vibrant picture that makes a striking impact on customers and employees alike.

“It was a pleasure to be the end user in this case and to see NEC’s level of detail and interest in delivering the right solution, and to know our customers are going to get the same treatment,” Prewett said.

VS Networks built a custom content management system based on the environment where Ingram Micro would use it. It also designed 70 percent of the content in the form of interactive content and passive



content via animated graphics, while Ingram can create and load static JPEGs on its own. The media player runs two operating systems so that content appears uninterrupted to viewers, even if updates are happening behind the scenes.

“NEC was absolutely instrumental in helping us provide consistency with the content throughout the campus,” Goldman said. “They consistently deliver top-of-the-line, commercial-grade displays, and this installation was no exception.”

VS Networks also monitors the displays 24 hours a day through the RS232 control to ensure they continue to perform consistently into the future.



As part of the video wall installation, Peerless AV designed custom mounts for a seamless appearance. The process went smoothly from start to finish because of the partnerships involved, said Scott Slubowski, channel manager at Peerless AV.

“It really makes a difference when you work with people who want to do the job right and make sure everything is in place,” he said.

Ingram and NEC understood that any reliable installation must start with a foundation of clean, stable power. To ensure maximum uptime and picture quality, SurgeX provided power protection that eliminates catastrophic surges without any negative after effects. Whereas other devices just suppress power surges, SurgeX prevents them from reaching the displays and controllers in the first place.

“With the significant investment we were making with our campus refresh, we had to be certain that our choice in power protection was not only effective, but flexible,” said Tom Jones, Ingram’s Senior Tech Solutions Engineer for ProAV and Digital Signage who was assigned to the project.

“We needed to better understand the conditions that could affect our digital signage that we couldn’t visibly see, and SurgeX has technologies already integrated into their products to do so. We wanted to be able to run analysis on line conditions and gather data to ensure that we always have a clear picture of our whole digital signage environment,” Jones said.

The SurgeX Multi-Pak product easily attached to the Peerless mounts and protects the entire solution. With protection like that, Ingram Micro doesn’t have to worry about power disturbances affecting the digital signage.

Ultimately for Ingram Micro, it was about treating itself like a client and partnering with a team that carefully considered each element of the project. As a result, the Buffalo campus is itself a showroom for Ingram Micro’s digital signage expertise.

“We’ve got more than 70 people at Ingram Micro dedicated to the digital signage business,” Prewett said. “They live and breathe it every day. Now the signage on our campus makes it even easier to sell those solutions.”

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