

Five star digital display solution

Sofitel Melbourne



Customer

- Sofitel Melbourne on Collins

Industry

- Hospitality

Challenges

- Information displays requiring regular and fast updates for a number of conferences and events hosted at the Sofitel
- Labour intensive process to update information displays manually
- Need to source digital displays in keeping with the hotel's five star rating

Solution

- NEC digital display solution complete with LCD screens, servers, software and computers

Results

- Up-to-date information displays
- Reduced staff costs
- Effective use of staff time
- Elegant information displays

Hardware / Applications

- NEC LCD panels (40" and 46")
- PC Versa P7200 -1800
- Media Players
- NEC PanelDirector (Standard)

Overview

To maintain its five-star reputation, Sofitel Melbourne deployed a five-star digital signage solution.

Sofitel Melbourne is a state-of-the-art hotel. It's a destination and meeting place for Melbourne's leisure and business communities. Voted one of Australia's 'top five' hotels by Qantas Frequent Flyers in 2009, the hotel won in two different categories – best business hotel and best leisure hotel.

The hotel offers 363 guest rooms, and is one of the greatest integrated hotel and conference venues. It is renowned for its excellent food, service, staff and innovative solutions for the most complex events. With almost half a million visitors to its property each year, Sofitel needed to effectively enhance the guest experience, and to quickly and accurately communicate vital information. They chose NEC Digital Signage.

Dynamic content on bright displays (adjustable to 450 cd/m2) commands substantially more attention, making it much more effective than traditional alternatives such as notice boards and posters.

According to Clive Scott, General Manager, Sofitel Melbourne: "The expectation is that you would have this kind of signage. You're communicating to customers to look quickly, see what they're looking for, and not feel uncomfortable in any way."

Sofitel Melbourne had been employing various methods to advise guests of events, deals and information: posters, phone messaging, and other physical signage. Manually posting information and event scheduling was tedious, labor-intensive, time-consuming, and the printed and posted information would quickly become outdated. Arriving groups would need to be informed in person, tying up staff and other resources.

Sofitel's challenge was to artfully add digital signage to fit the property's mission of having a tasteful decor, and providing efficient service to guests.

NEC delivers digital display solutions tailored to address your business needs.

The Process

The keys to success were Sofitel's commitment to exceptional guest experience and NEC's expertise in digital signage.

The move to upgrade the lobby and meeting areas began in 2006. Sofitel management began seeing digital signage at sister properties overseas and realised that it was necessary to begin following the trend – and to take the same modern approach to communicating with guests.

Yet rolling out digital signage is not as simple as installing a television at home, or in a guest room of a hotel. Dynamic signage in the business environment is more complicated for a number of reasons: Digital signage content has a new set of requirements; existing media assets can't be used outright since all new media is digital. Also, a 40-inch screen in landscape calls for different content than a 32-inch screen in portrait. Reformatted content is required.

Even different business disciplines are at work. Digital signage appears on the surface to be an IT project, and yet it is also a marketing initiative. They both involve teamwork and sharing of duties. Sofitel needed a partner that knew all of this and had 'been there, done that'.

Sofitel relied on NEC's expertise and experience to guide them through every stage of their implementation (cabling, mounting, training, etc.).

NEC provides a total solution for digital signage – from assessment and implementation to follow-up service and support. Since ease of installation is a main concern for everyone installing information displays, NEC designed their displays to be lightweight, making them simple to install.

Scott and team also did their homework. "There were long discussions as to where they should be located. What areas of the hotel. The designer followed people to see where they looked first. So when you come up the escalator, there's one to the left. One you can see to the right. And right before you get into an elevator," says Scott.

Since Sofitel was concerned with maintaining fresh content, NEC provided media creation services and consultation, as well as user-friendly, customisable templates that ensure content is always effective and visually appealing.

"It all had to fit in with what's going on in the rest of the lobby. Our lobby is modern, in the traditional style, but has an Art Deco feel to it. So those screens had to assimilate into that space."

Clive Scott, General Manager, Sofitel Melbourne

System Overview

The switch from one-time art to dynamic messaging.

By choosing digital signage, Sofitel clearly had the user's role in mind – ensuring they are delivering the right message to the right guests at the right time. The technology-rich installation began with innovative NEC LCD monitors that have consistently set the standard for flat-panel technology.

MultiSync 15 series public displays were quickly installed, replacing the existing posters and printed signboards. The ultra-high resolution (1366 x 768) NEC displays were chosen based on screen brightness, performance and ability to deliver maximum impact. Xtra-View wide-angling viewing technology delivers flexible, horizontal and vertical view angles with less glare, reflection and distortion.

The backlight system leads to better brightness performance, longer display life, and requires only an eco-friendly 260 watts. The next-generation technology has 20+ advanced features to take screen performance to uncharted levels, lower total cost of ownership and enhance display management. Six-way colour control provides bright content display. Automatic black-level adjustment regulates greyscale images for optimal picture quality.

Instantly, Sofitel had the means to impress, inform and entertain their target audience with screens capable of live feeds. In both portrait or landscape mode.

The NEC CentreSystem interface is intuitive to use and supports formats from almost all applications.

The data and signage files are sent to the fanless Digital Signage Media Player located near each display. Which then drive any multi-media content to the displays.

CableComp technology equalises the video signal to eliminate halos on long cable runs (up to 325 feet/100 meters) that are necessary in large installations.

The entire solution is run by software. Requiring only a few steps, NEC's easy-to-use Panel System digital signage software allows Sofitel's employees to operate the system themselves and take full advantage of the power of digital signage.

Using photos, videos or flash animations, the digital signage software ensures that user-created media content reaches the monitors in only a few mouse clicks.

NEC PanelDirector software manages, schedules and distributes content. Sofitel employees are in total control of the messages they send to their customers. Different content can be displayed on multiple displays in multiple locations.

“Instantly, people see the signage, think, I’m at the right place. I’m part of a bigger event.”

Clive Scott, General Manager, Sofitel Melbourne

Results and future prospects

For Sofitel, the greatest return on investment is measured by the return of guests.

The benefits of digital signage over traditional static signage are immediate. Content is now exchanged more easily, animations are readily shown, and the displays adapt to the context and audience interactively.

With the new medium, Sofitel can inform guests of restaurant and food operations, promote local events, display wedding configurations and explain reward programs.

Digital signage also offers superior return on investment, compared to traditional printed signs. How? At Sofitel, the most important customers are not the first-timers, but the ones who return after an experience.

According to Scott, "A large part of our business is helping with conferencing. Digital signage is very much appreciated by the customer, because you can go to a customer and say we have these digital opportunities."

In fact, an interactive component has emerged with the new displays. "Instantly, people see the signage, think, I'm at the right place. I'm part of a bigger event," adds Scott. And with speakers' highlights on the electronic boards, it's 'goodbye' to the conference newspaper under your door at the end or the beginning of the day.

The conference centre at Sofitel Melbourne is becoming a destination in itself. And this solution is providing one more brand-building and customer-loyalty tool.

For Sofitel, this is not a one-time upgrade. The hotel will roll out more displays and add more capabilities.

Vantage point - NEC staff opinion

Steven Macdonald, National Sales Manager
Display Solutions Division, NEC Australia Pty Ltd.

NEC Digital Signage deployment in Sofitel is a very exciting project, providing a high-profile in the corporate and public space.

Sofitel's management engaged their architects to design wooden housings to blend with the decor and the aesthetics of the hotel. This resulted in the signage being highly visible, but non-intrusive.

Working with Sofitel's IT department, we were able to simply add our signage components onto their existing network without any impact on the existing network infrastructure, and without any impact on the services, or on their network.

Multiple training sessions were held onsite with Sofitel staff, who easily grasped the operations and day-to-day functions of the signage software – NEC PanelDirector.

Sofitel staff have used the signage system very effectively to promote activities and functions within the hotel. The signage has also been used to enhance the experience of their corporate customers at events and conferences at Sofitel. Sofitel has received praise from their customers for how the signage has enhanced their functions and events.

Due to the success of digital signage, Sofitel has added the number of displays to their system, targeting new areas in the hotel.

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