Digital Signage Quenches Students' Thirst in the Netherlands

Have you had your eight glasses of water today? It's challenging for people, especially children and teens, to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Staying hydrated is a large part of living well. While the convenience of bottled water can help people meet their water quotas for the day, it's not necessarily eco-friendly. Aside from the plastic bottles, road transport to deliver the product to stores shelves causes increased fuel emissions.

Water coolers present a great alternative to individually bottled waters, especially in school environments. But students across the Netherlands are seeing a different type of water cooler in their schools. These new free-standing units combine the traditional concept of water coolers with the growing popularity of attention-grabbing multimedia displays and user-generated content (think YouTube).

Through an initiative called TENQ (pronounced "tank"), local water companies and health organizations are working together to install multimedia-enabled water coolers across hundreds of schools in the country. They named the program "TENQ," inspired by local slang for drinking water.

"Tap water distributed through pipes provides a healthy and environmentally sound alternative to bottled water," said Fine Trossèl, Managing Director, TENQ. "By installing a stylish water cooler from TENQ, schools improve students' access to tap water in a 'clean' environment, and they make drinking water a fun experience."

Currently, nearly 400 TENQ coolers are found in middle schools and vocational schools around the Netherlands, offering students the option to fill up their own bottle with sparkling or regular water. Each cooler features a 19-inch LCD screen that plays educational programming, advertising and user-generated content. Schools have the option to install larger LCD screens near the TENQ unit for increased visibility.

TENQ water coolers are available upon request by any school, and the coolers are installed and maintained in

cooperation with local water utility companies. Funding for the water can come directly from the schools, or students can purchase their own servings of water.

A Cooler Community

With programming changing daily, students can learn something new each time they visit a cooler for more water. Content ranges from a mix of news, entertainment, educational information and school-specific updates.

"When we envisioned the concept of TENQ — combining access to fresh and cool drinking water with interactive media — we also saw the chance to build a community for participating schools," said Trossèl. "We realized that teachers and students at schools could communicate with each other on a daily basis by uploading their own content to be viewed on TENQ's screens."

Currently, the TENQ network reaches more than 250,000 students. Students can visit www.tenq.tv or their "my tenq" account to upload personal videos and pictures. This content can be viewed by other students on the Web site, and some of the content plays on the TENQ screens at their own school.

"Our school embraces the TENQ water cooler as an inexpensive and environmentally friendly way to contribute to our students' health," said H. van Ommen, Director of Arentheem College in Arnhem. "The updates and changes to screen content keep students interested."

A survey commissioned by one of the founders of TENQ, Stichting WaterWijs (known as WaterWise Foundation in English), revealed that 83 percent of students regularly viewed broadcasts on the TENQ screens, and 87 percent said that they considered the programming fun to watch.

With these results, TENQ gives advertisers an opportunity to reach a very specific demographic. Stichting WaterWijs regulates campaigns closely to make sure they align with organizations' mission statements. Governmental organizations, universities, banks and consumer brands targeting the teen audience are planning advertising campaigns on the coolers' screens. Because of these

sponsored messages, TENQ service is available at a low price for schools.

TENQ also decided to partner with Aqua for All, a Dutch non-profit organization committed to providing clean drinking water to developing countries in need. A percentage of proceeds of water sales from TENQ are donated to Aqua for All, and many schools feel that it's important for students to be aware of the link with the charity.

"School administrators have really embraced the idea of students contributing to water-related help projects through every bottle they fill," said Trossèl.

TENQ

Running the Network

When designing the network, TENQ needed a software solution that was Web-based and could use meta data to send content to appropriate screens. It had to interface with the online community. Because the network would expand over time and be installed in more schools, scalability was key. After exploring several software options, TENQ selected Scala software as the platform for its network. Scala Certified Partner Hulskamp was chosen to install the software and help the TENQ system become operational.

"We knew that TENQ would continue expanding over time, and we needed software that would grow with the program," said Trossèl. "Scala also gave us the flexibility we needed to make content specific to each school."

Working with Scala, TENQ can provide each school access to the network. School administrators can log in to their own Web portal and input information that is visible on the screen through a ticker bar. Through this site, they can also power the screens on or off, as well as control the audio content.

Scala's flexibility gives TENQ the opportunity to explore new applications. TENQ is now expanding to elementary schools with a special version called TENQY for children from 4 to 12 years old. TENQY also features a built-in flatscreen, and programming is tailored for that younger audience. After pilot testing, the majority of children in schools with TENQY coolers reported drinking more water. Plans are in place for TENQY to continue expanding in elementary schools in the Netherlands and potentially other countries as well.

There has also been interest in TENQ outside of the Netherlands and beyond the school environment. Government offices and businesses are looking into installing TENQ coolers to communicate and quench the thirst of employees while making them a captive audience. Major airports in Europe have also looked into installing TENQ coolers in their departure zones. TENQ would give airports a way to offer travelers access to fresh drinking water and important information at the same time.

About TENQ

TENQ is both a stylish water cooler and a broadcast system. Currently, more than 250,000 students broadcast their own videos and photos over the TENQ network. Any secondary school in the Netherlands can request a TENQ cooler, and it is maintained by a local water company. For more information, visit www.tenq.tv.

About Scala

Driving more than 500,000 screens worldwide, Scala is a leading global provider of digital signage and advertising management solutions. Scala is the world's first connected signage company, offering the leading platform for content creation, management and distribution in digital signage networks and the first unified platform for advertising management of both traditional and digital signage networks. The company's digital signage customers include Rabobank, IKEA, Burger King, T-Mobile, Virgin MegaStore, Warner Brothers, The Life Channel, Rikstoto, Repsol, NorgesGruppen, Audi, ECE Flatmedia, Kaufhof (Metro Group) and thousands more. Advertising management customers include CBS Outdoor, Clear Channel Outdoor and Magic Media, among others. Scala is headquartered near Philadelphia, USA, and has subsidiaries in Canada, The Netherlands, France, Norway, Germany and Japan, as well as more than 450 partners in more than 60 countries. More information is available at www.scala.com.