

Pioneering 'Premium' Information Delivery to Customers

As a mutual insurer, Ethias does not answer to shareholders and invests to protect and reward its customers, a commitment that has established a strong reputation for governance and ethical operations. In 2003, €67,931 million was returned in rebates and dividends to corporations and individuals.

Technical innovation

Ethias is also renowned for being a company that applies new technology to drive sales and improve customer care. Its Web operation generated €150 million in 2003 and received Inside Internets 'E-Commerce 2003' award for its quality and ease of use. In keeping with its drive to enhance its operations through technology, Ethias recently installed a network of 15 Pioneer screens in the foyers of its busiest offices to display dynamic media that is created and distributed by Ethias' ITteam. The media package reinforces brand awareness and creates sales leads by playing extended excerpts from major movies intermixed with promotional material that reflects the company's marketing themes delivered by TV, radio, on-line and the press.

The screens are controlled using Scala software and can be managed and updated from a single PC over its IT network while any content creation software can be used to generate the broadcast material. Patrick Vanderstraeten, Ethias' e-Commerce executive comments, "We've created a high quality yet low maintenance custom animation system combining Pioneer's plasma displays -that we found to be the clearest, brightest and most reliable



screens available- and Scala's broadcast software. The installation is having a very positive impact on our business. Sales managers report that it's generating a high level of leads while a recent survey revealed that 90 percent of customers welcomed the entertainment. Concerns were only raised if the foyers were too busy and people could not properly view the screens!"

Display selection

A key consideration for Ethias was the technical capabilities of the plasma displays. The displays would be switched on for at least nine hours a day while the layout of each foyer creates different operating conditions. Some displays are situated where this a good deal of bright, natural light while others are sited in areas of low and artificial light.

Patrick Vanderstraeten comments, "As part of our due diligence we reviewed a number of displays from leading manufacturers and consulted with our installation partner Media Innovative Communications Technology, (Mediashow in Belgium and found that at least 60 percent of the exhibitors were using Pioneer screens."

The high clarity, brightness and contrast levels of Pioneer's displays

particularly impressed Ethias. These factors ultimately led to its selection of Pioneer's PDP-43MXE1 displays as Patrick Vanderstraeten explains, "We tested the screens from a range of distances and found that on Pioneer's displays text and video remained crisp even at very close distances. The screens also include an automatic brightness control to adjust to ambient light conditions. This is an important feature - as we manage displays remotely we cannot physically maintain the screens. Along with complete digital signalling that delivers a sharp image the screens deliver exceptional performance in the variety of conditions found in our foyers. It's this flexibility that convinced us Pioneer is the optimum brand for our installation."

Content creation, distribution and display management

To provide remote network management Ethias, in conjunction with Media-ICT Belgium, reviewed several systems before selecting Scala's InfoChannel 3. An end-to-end media production tool it comprises three components. InfoChannel Designer enables the production of professional corporate content using any software and video codecs, including Div-X, MPEG 2, Flash and Photoshop. This is distributed using InfoChannel Network Manager from a single desktop and played back using InfoChannel Player.

Jean-Marie Defraigne, managing director of Media-ICT Belgium comments, "We built small PCs with Pentium 4 processors and 40GB hard drives that are connected to the rear of the plasma displays. The

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PCs are compact and easily hidden behind the screens which are mounted on sleek stainless steel stands. As well as content distribution the screens are controlled through the IT network. They can be automatically switched on and off and the system immediately notifies the network manager if any display encounters technical problems. This ensures that the entire installation can be managed by a single PC from Ethias' head office."

The content is updated by the IT team unless complex animation is required when this is produced by Ethias' design agency. Text is kept to a minimum with animation and video used to capture and retain customers' attention. The corporate information is integrated between 20 minute slots of a high-profile feature film that's edited to provide an insight into the entire movie. The film is updated once a month while

the themed corporate data refreshed on a quarterly basis.

Minor content alterations are required on a weekly basis and often daily basis to reflect a new marketing campaign, product or promotion. An important aspect of the Scala solution is that incremental changes can be uploaded without having to refresh all of the content. With individual offices also often requiring amendments to reflect local events or regional promotions, this flexibility reduces bottlenecks on Ethias' network. To further reduce network congestion, updates can also be scheduled to occur automatically overnight

Reliable, scaleable

Customer impact and return on investment are the primary measurement tools applied by Ethias. The installation has surpassed expectations on both counts as Patrick Vanderstraeten comments, "The Pioneer displays are extremely high quality but they are also very reliable. In an installation like ours, where we cannot physically monitor the displays, this is a great asset. In addition, the clarity of the displays helps to engage our customers and we find that the dynamic mix of media and company promotion connects customers with our brand and product messages much more effectively than content.

"The feedback from customers indicates that they appreciate the astute use of company and feature-film content that offers a truly entertaining package. We are delighted by the system which is delivering corporate messages direct to our customers and helping to generate sales as customers often ask about products they've seen on-screen.

We expect to expand the installation significantly over the next year to build on its success."

About Scala Inc.

Scala, (www.scala.com) the world's leading provider of software for digital signage software used in retail, finance, education, entertainment, government and other markets, is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2007. With its roots in the Cable TV industry, Scala has evolved to become the global leader in digital signage software. Over the years, Scala created a cutting-edge multimedia software platform that powers thousands of digital signs around the world including the digital signage networks of Tesco, the Paris Palais de Congrès, Best Buy, T-Mobile, La Grande Récré, ShopRite, Hertz, Virgin MegaStore, EuroDisney, Bloomberg, Burger King, Kiwi, Futuramedia, BT Global, Azizia-Panda Supermarket, IKEA, Norisbank, Carrefour, McKee Foods, Muvico, Santiago Airport, Sainsbury's, Repsol, RaboBank and many others. Since InfoChannel® is proven, scalable, and easy to manage, it is the platform of choice for many digital display networks ranging in size from one to thousands of screens with uses including advertising displays, touch screens, retail TV, LED billboards, lobby signage, digital menu boards, interactive kiosks, and more. Scala pioneered the industry of digital signage in 1987, and is today headquartered near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States of America with offices in California, the UK, France, Norway, The Netherlands, China and Japan.

